United Nations A/64/PV.11

General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

11th plenary meeting
Monday, 28 September 2009, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki ..... (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Antonella Mularoni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of San Marino.

Ms. Mularoni (San Marino): Mr. President, I wish to congratulate you on your election as the head of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session and to assure you that the delegation of the Republic of San Marino will do its utmost in collaborating with you throughout the session.

In my first speech before this Assembly as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of San Marino, I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for guiding this Organization with great energy and extraordinary dedication. I wish to mention his admirable commitment in the area of reform and his constant and important involvement in world affairs.

The United Nations reform process is fundamental to ensuring future world stability and must remain a priority in our efforts, not only because we have the duty to guarantee that the Organization and all its activities are fully effective, but in particular in order to preserve its primary and essential value. We cannot afford to witness a decentralization of the substantial role of the United Nations caused by the impossibility of reaching agreement on measures to be implemented for the improvement of its functioning.

Moreover, I would like to express the appreciation of San Marino for the work accomplished in the General Assembly with the contribution of all States Members of the United Nations, as well as for the attention paid to particularly relevant issues, such as the world economic and financial crisis, climate change and the global food crisis.

The Republic of San Marino supports the process of the revitalization of the General Assembly. That process is a political reform necessary to reaffirm the Assembly's role as the most representative body of the United Nations, as well as the role and leadership of its President. San Marino believes that the reform should make the activities of the General Assembly more efficient and effective, improve its relations with the other main United Nations bodies to avoid duplication of work and aim at the effective implementation of its resolutions.

The Security Council reform process, which the Republic of San Marino has been following with commitment and interest since the beginning, is also very important. We are grateful to the Afghan Chair for the important activity carried out and for the way in which it has presided over the intergovernmental negotiations aimed at reaching the widest possible political agreement on Security Council reforms.

San Marino believes that the aims of the reform should be to make the Security Council more democratic, transparent, efficient, accountable and

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

09-52598 (E)

Please recycle

representative, to restore the balance between the Security Council and the General Assembly, and to enhance its cooperation with the Secretariat. It is important that this process allow for the development of a sense of belonging to the Security Council among all Member States, thus avoiding the risk that it could be perceived as an isolated body within the United Nations. Moreover, the reform should take into consideration the legitimate interest of all States, big and small, in being elected to the Security Council.

San Marino participates with commitment and interest in the intergovernmental negotiations on the reform of the Security Council and regrets that, to date, no reasonable compromise has been reached to make it more representative, democratic and possibly less paralyzed by cross-vetoes concerning fundamental issues.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The reforms of the General Assembly and the Security Council are encompassed in a wider process of transformation and strengthening of the role of the United Nations within the global governance system. San Marino believes that the United Nations plays and must continue to play a pivotal role in managing the global governance system and that the United Nations reform process must be aimed at reaching this objective.

Today's world is characterized by marked differences in terms of power, wealth, income and social well-being among nations and peoples, and within individual nations. Unfortunately, the world is beset by numerous ethnic and interreligious conflicts, which are sometimes fuelled by economic and geopolitical factors originating outside the area of the conflict. Moreover, global warming, which is also a consequence of indiscriminate energy consumption in developed and developing countries, is one of the major causes of disasters and is leading, inter alia, to a reduction in agricultural yields in tropical and subtropical countries. Furthermore, this year in particular the world economy has undergone one of the most devastating financial crises in history, whose consequences are clear to everyone.

These challenges can be faced only through global and coordinated action, and the United Nations has the responsibility and the duty to be at the centre of this process. Only by tapping into the rich and varied cultures and traditions represented by the United Nations is it possible to manage the global governance system in such a way as to achieve sustainable human development. That the United Nations might relinquish its role as leader of the global governance system in favour of other bodies would be a defeat for all.

Unfortunately, the widespread poverty that affects such a large percentage of the global population, causing hunger, disease and underdevelopment, is one of the most endemic problems faced by States. Despite the efforts made and the commitments undertaken at a global level, poverty continues to plague the whole planet.

San Marino values the efforts and success of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) over the last 60 years and is proud to host Jacques Diouf, FAO Director-General, as the official speaker at the investiture ceremony of the new Captains-Regent, the heads of State of the Republic of San Marino, which will take place on 1 October 2009.

San Marino endorses the Millennium Development Goals — which have unfortunately become more difficult to achieve because of the crisis we are currently facing — and believes we must continue in our commitment.

The strengthening of multilateralism — included by the Assembly President in the theme proposed for this general debate, namely "Effective responses to global crises: strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development" — is, in my opinion, a central element. In fact, international organizations, and the United Nations in the first instance, promote the affirmation of democracy, rule of law, freedoms and human rights as a condition for economic and social development, cultural growth and education.

The current world economic and financial crisis is the greatest global disaster since the very birth of the United Nations, all the more so because it has added to a severe food crisis that has affected many regions of the world. As this crisis concerns all countries and regions indiscriminately, it is now one of the major challenges our Organization has to face.

The Republic of San Marino, as a small State, attaches great importance to the role of the General Assembly in the lives of our nations. It has welcomed the high-level Conference on the World Financial and

Economic Crisis and has supported its outcome document (resolution 63/303, annex), which is the result of long and complex negotiations. However, I note with regret that the uncertainty in the preparation of the Conference and the difficulties encountered in drafting the final document discouraged the participation of many world leaders, whose presence could have made that United Nations conference an historic event.

The task of the United Nations is to find, through coordinated and global action, the right methods to mitigate the impact of the crisis and to achieve sustainable economic growth and development, taking into account the negative effects of the crisis on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Climate change has become a central issue on the United Nations agenda in the last three years, thanks to the commitment and efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General in this regard. Climate change, which in the 1990s was already among the main environmental concerns, has now become an absolute priority on the political agenda of all States, including the smallest ones like our Republic. The deep changes caused by human intervention in the energy dynamics of the climate system are indeed the elements of this concern for the present and immediate future. Therefore, urgent and significant changes in social and economic development patterns cannot be further postponed.

San Marino has recently submitted its first national communication in accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That communication represents the beginning of a process, first of all of a social and cultural nature, aimed at making all citizens of our country aware of the need to face climate changes and effectively commit to reducing as much as possible the impact of these changes.

Among the most serious challenges we have to face at national and international levels, terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is of primary importance. The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 represents a fundamental initiative, because for the first time all Member States agreed to a common strategic and operational approach to counter terrorism. Such a strategy laid the foundations for a coordinated response to this emergency by envisaging preventive measures and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the fight against terrorism. It also recognizes that counter-terrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals; on the contrary, they are complementary and mutually reinforcing.

However, an effective response to terrorism must also be based on education in order to foster understanding and respect for each other as a sine qua non condition for achieving justice and peace. Indeed, hatred, lack of understanding and injustice provide breeding grounds for terrorist groups and organizations to recruit new members.

My country focuses great attention, both at the national and international levels, to the promotion and protection of human rights, with special attention paid to those of the weakest and most vulnerable groups. I am pleased to recall that this year we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a fundamental instrument that has been ratified by a large number of States. However, we must not forget that still today 9.2 million children under the age of five die every year from largely preventable causes and more than 100 million school-age children do not have access to education. Furthermore, many children are robbed of their childhood, are victims of sexual violence, are used by armies or armed groups as soldiers or sold as sexual slaves.

San Marino applauds and supports the United Nations and UNICEF for the efforts undertaken worldwide in order to improve the life of these children. We also actively endorse the United Nations commitment to women's rights.

Finally, the protection of human rights is strictly connected to the need to guarantee every human being and every population the possibility of living in peace and justice. It is therefore necessary to give new momentum to the disarmament process. An important step was taken last year in this regard by adopting the Convention on Cluster Munitions, an instrument that will prove essential to protecting affected populations from those weapons, which have devastating effects on civilians. The Republic of San Marino attaches great importance to this Convention, which is focused on human dignity and the interests of victims, and hopes that it will promptly enter into force. We therefore call upon the States that have not yet ratified it to do so as soon as possible.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marco Hausiku, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Hausiku (Namibia): I would like to congratulate the President on his unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. We are confident that he will discharge the responsibilities of that office with honour and dignity, given his track record and experience. I wish to assure him of Namibia's support and cooperation to ensure that his tenure in office is crowned with success. In the same vein, I wish to commend His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for the able manner in which he presided over the Assembly at its sixty-third session. I equally wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts in leading our Organization to respond effectively to the large number of challenges and pressing issues facing humanity.

We are meeting today at a very challenging time. The impact of the world financial and economic crisis on our countries and economies is very severe. This crisis is a major concern that requires concerted efforts to search for effective methods of coping with it, in order to mitigate its impact and to achieve sustainable growth and development. This crisis is taking its toll on every aspect of our development and social life. The progress that we made in the fight against poverty, hunger and diseases, as well as in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is threatened.

The financial crisis came in the middle of the food and energy crisis. Skyrocketing prices of basic foodstuffs, though said to have stabilized now, have left many households unable to put food on the table. Net food importing countries like Namibia had to divert resources from development to emergency relief, while importing high-priced food destabilized our balance of payments and State revenues.

The situation was also worsened by high fuel prices. Oil-importing developing countries like ours have been negatively affected by ever-increasing oil prices, which have also led to price increases in other sectors, as suppliers of goods and services raise prices to make up for production and transportation costs.

The financial and economic crisis, coupled with the food and energy crisis, has plunged the world into a global recession. The combination of these crises with climate change and its adverse impact on sustainable development is cause for great concern. Namibia, like many other developing countries, is an insignificant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Yet our country is one of the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. I therefore call upon major emitters to not only make drastic reductions in their greenhouse gas emissions, but also to use technology and financial resources to support the efforts of developing countries to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. The Government of the Republic of Namibia fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to mobilize political will to ensure a good and legally binding agreement on climate change in Copenhagen this December.

Namibia is one of the countries with the highest socio-economic inequality in the world because of its colonial past. Nevertheless, the country has made progress in the provision of health, education and other critical services for the majority of the population, and we are on course to meet a number of the MDGs.

However, we face severe difficulties in responding to the combination of the devastating HIV/AIDS pandemic, high levels of food insecurity and poverty. I once again call upon the international community to increase support to our national programmes for sustainable economic and social development through measures such as market access and access to financial resources in the form of concessional loans and foreign direct investment flows.

The need for a strong and effective United Nations cannot be overemphasized. The process for the reform of the Organization should be expedited in order to deliver on its promises in the maintenance of international peace and security, respect for human rights, social and economic development and the protection of the environment.

There is an urgent need to reform the Security Council to make it more representative, democratic and accountable. Is it not an anomaly, and unjust, that Africa remains the only region without permanent representation on the Security Council? This does not reflect the continent's vital role in the maintenance of global peace and security. The need for Africa to be equitably represented on the Council, with all the privileges associated with membership, remains our priority. In this regard, Namibia stands by the common

African position on the reform of the United Nations as articulated in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

Namibia welcomes the joint communiqué on strengthening the capacity of the African Union (AU) in peacekeeping operations, as agreed to by the United Nations Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council, as a step in the right direction. There is a need for more structured and formalized cooperation between the two bodies on issues of peace and security in Africa. Such cooperation should also include the areas of financing, logistics, transfer of technology and training. Furthermore, there is a need for the United Nations to support the AU position of principle on not recognizing Governments that come to power through military coups. Namibia calls upon the General Assembly to urgently pass a resolution prohibiting the participation of such Governments in the activities of all United Nations institutions.

The right of all people to self-determination is a fundamental human right, which is enshrined in the United Nations Charter. It is deplorable that almost 10 years into the twenty-first century colonialism is still an issue with which this Organization has to deal.

My delegation has raised its voice repeatedly in this Assembly, calling for the realization of the inalienable rights of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination. The international community has an obligation to assist the people of Western Sahara in their quest for freedom and independence. Namibia therefore calls for the immediate and unconditional implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara and of all resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, with the aim of holding a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara.

Similarly, Namibia is deeply concerned about the continuing suffering of the people of Palestine under Israeli occupation. We wish to reaffirm our full and unequivocal support for the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine to self-determination, including the return to their land. I wish to again call upon the parties to resume the peace process on the basis of all relevant United Nations resolutions.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its long-held position on the unilateral economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba. We believe that the blockade constitutes a violation of international law and the rights of the people of Cuba. Its extraterritorial nature impedes free trade and economic development. Furthermore, it undermines the efforts of the international community to attain the internationally agreed development goals, as it affects that country's economy adversely and subjects its people to untold pain and suffering.

We urge the Government of the United States of America to heed the call of the international community and to implement the resolutions of the General Assembly that call for an end to the blockade. Namibia wishes to reaffirm its solidarity with and support of Cuba's call for the immediate release of the five Cuban nationals detained in the United States of America.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Governments and international organizations that responded in a timely manner to our appeal for support and assistance following the devastating floods that my country has experienced during the past two years. That assistance has greatly contributed to the alleviation of the suffering of those in the affected areas.

Finally, I wish to call upon all States Members of the United Nations, in keeping with their responsibilities and obligations under the United Nations Charter, to fully address the challenges facing humankind today in order to make the world a better place for all and where we can all live together in peace, security and true justice.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. José Antonio García Belaunde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. García Belaunde (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first of all to congratulate Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Knowing his broad experience in the United Nations and his dedication to dialogue and consensus, I assure him that Peru will constructively support his initiatives.

The global outlook is extremely complex and full of great contradictions. We face the deepest economic and financial international crisis that our generation has experienced and which once again proves that the borders in a global world are purely cartographic and that the symbol of our times remains interdependency. The economic and financial crisis has stymied world

growth and, above all, exposed the weaknesses that caused the market to malfunction. As rarely in recent history, the international community has mobilized huge resources and political capital to avoid unprecedented economic collapse. A significant share of those resources must support the developing countries, which certainly did not cause the crisis but are the most affected by it.

It is regrettable that the convergence of wills and interests with regard to the crisis is, in turn, not apparent with equal resolve in the endeavour to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and to firmly address the threats that endanger freedom, democracy and, ultimately, regional and global stability.

In that context, allow me to point out that one crucial problem we face is the huge sums spent on arms acquisitions. How can we explain to our peoples that, in the midst of one of the worst global economic recessions and with more than 1 billion people living in extreme poverty throughout the world, countries can commit over $1,464 billion to military expenditure in 2008, and that, while economies contract, arms purchases grow in real terms every year?

Recently, the President of Peru, Mr. Alan García, in a communication to South America's ministers for foreign affairs and of defence that is being circulated as a document of this General Assembly (A/64/367), seriously questioned that state of affairs in the region and asked why, in the five years since the establishment of the Union of South American Nations, our countries have allocated for military spending a total of $156 billion, but in addition have acquired approximately $23 billion more in new weapons, cannons, aircraft and ships. That figure could reach $38 billion this year. The President appealed for that absurdity to stop if conditions are created for a strengthening of security and confidence in the region.

To that end, on this occasion I affirm Peru's proposal that a friendship and non-aggression pact be concluded to guarantee the commitments to strengthening a zone of peace in South America, and to achieve the gradual reduction of arms purchases and the future establishment of a peace and interposition force to avert any conflict in the region. The final objective would be to create a regional collective security system that complements and is upheld by the Charter of the United Nations, enabling all our countries to end the arms race in which South America, a region that is otherwise demonstrating great maturity and respect for international law in the handling of its disputes, seems to be engaged for no discernible reason. Our proposal will certainly require greater study and consideration in the light of experiences in other parts of the world.

A second transnational threat that is not receiving due attention is drug trafficking and its dangerous link to terrorism and violence in general, the consequences of which affect not only the security and rights of millions of people, but also the environment. We are paying an enormous price through our inaction concerning a problem that causes millions of deaths a year and tremendous material losses.

At the global level, the traffic in drugs brings in around $500 billion a year, equivalent to 8 per cent of global trade, while, according to data of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, their use affects over 200 million people, in particular young people, throughout the world.

According to the 2008 report of the International Narcotics Control Board, it is clear that South America's narcotics trafficking networks collaborate with one another in their illicit activities, especially money-laundering, and recruit specialists at the highest technical level. It is therefore a matter of urgency that combating narcotics trafficking once more be given top priority on the world agenda and in cooperation between developed countries, pursuant to the principle of shared responsibility.

We must respond jointly to halt the advance of narcotics trafficking and related criminal activities, such as trafficking in arms or people, the destruction of nature, corruption and terrorism. Legislation concerning illicit crops and their interdiction and eradication should be complemented by prevention and rehabilitation programmes aimed at comprehensive, alternative and sustainable development. To that end, the concerted efforts of all international actors are essential under the principles of cooperation and, above all, shared responsibility.

In Peru, drug traffickers are working with the remnants of terrorist groups. This situation exponentially increases the level of violence among both criminal groups, and if we do not solve the problem now, we may find ourselves in a situation of unprecedented consequences in the future. Illicit coca

production is a process of utmost destructiveness to the environment. Three hectares of forest have to be destroyed to obtain one hectare of coca. This is causing irreparable damage in the Peruvian Amazon forest; the logging and burning of trees to clear land for illegal crops erodes the soil and has resulted in the deforestation of 2.5 million hectares of Amazon forest, a leading contribution to global warming.

For all these reasons, the Government of Peru has devoted special attention to the problem in terms of financial and human resources. But the results have often left us feeling that this is a solitary struggle with a problem for which the international community, and especially the countries that consume the bulk of narcotic drugs, do not have adequate or rapid solutions. Peru, which dedicates more than $600 million a year to fighting an illicit industry with a turnover of $22 billion, cannot fight the illicit production of drugs alone or hope for any long-term success without the firm, supportive cooperation of the international community and, particularly, of the consuming countries, based on the established principle of shared responsibility.

Real cooperation has diminished alarmingly since 2002. The largest contributor to Peru reduced its contribution from $140 million to $128 million in 2003 and to $116 million in 2004. This year, the total will be $70 million and next year, $57 million. Peru therefore considers it essential for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to draft a report providing updated figures for the global resources that the international community allocates to combating the illegal narcotics trade, the donor sources and specific ongoing projects, as well as identifying key programmes to improve cooperation with the countries most affected by illegal drug production. Such precise, reliable and internationally comparable information would dispel many myths concerning the efforts and joint action that we should undertake without delay, and would be a practical starting point from which to better coordinate the efforts of contributing States, international organizations and financial institutions with those States most affected by illegal narcotics production and trafficking, in order to strengthen them in this fight. We hope that this task can be accomplished without delay, since, I repeat, international action in this area must not be postponed.

Another sensitive issue that has been the subject of special debate is that of climate change and the preservation of the environment in general. Peru is suffering dramatically from the effects of global warming, seen in the accelerated retreat of its tropical glaciers and its ensuing difficulties in adequately meeting the water needs of its population. Peru considers it essential to establish concrete goals for technological cooperation and transfer, as well as the creation of financial assistance funds for projects aimed at directly combating the effects of climate change in the countries most affected by it. Faced with the urgent need to confront the adverse effects of climate change, Peru supports the ongoing establishment of binding international commitments by the countries that created this problem, and hopes that at the fifteenth International Conference on Climate Change, to be held in Copenhagen in December, all States will be willing to adopt them.

In this regard, Peru reiterates its proposal that a financial mechanism be established towards the creation of a global fund to support measures aimed at mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change in developing countries. This would involve a duty of $0.50 on every barrel of oil, inasmuch as the fuel bears a responsibility at every stage in its chain of production, from extraction through refining to its uses, direct and indirect. Peru also proposes that comprehensive programmes of adaptation to climate change be established. Such programmes, which could be financed by the Global Environment Facility or the World Bank, would identify a comprehensive approach to sectoral adaptation and emphasize strategies to reduce the occurrence of disasters and to protect the health and food security of affected populations, economic infrastructure and biodiversity.

Finally, we wish to raise an issue of particular interest to Peru and developing countries in general — the situation of migrants. Peru is an active promoter of the defence of the human rights of migrants and their families, and of the sharing of responsibility for addressing this phenomenon by their countries of origin and host countries. We endorse the principle that migration is a factor for development and has undeniably been so throughout human history. It has enriched the culture and social life of nations, and allowed us to come into contact with the contributions, discoveries and developments that have gradually shaped our modern society.

It is therefore essential that we be aware that what migrants contribute to their host countries today,

and what they can contribute in the future, will be in large measure the backbone of those societies. That is why xenophobic and discriminatory pressures must be avoided, since they do nothing but delay the inevitable integration of the world and the human race.

In Latin America, we are living through a crucial time in the consolidation of democracy and the promotion of the social and political rights of our peoples. Peru therefore expresses its deep concern over the recent events in the sister country of Honduras, where the democratic system has been abruptly interrupted. The actions taken against Brazil's embassy in Honduras should be repudiated and should cease immediately, pursuant to Honduras's legal traditions as a country that respects its international obligations, particularly the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

We call for a dialogue aimed at re-establishing democracy in Honduras. All Honduran political groups should take advantage of the return of President Manuel Zelaya to Tegucigalpa to establish a Government of unity and national reconciliation as outlined in the San José agreement, which, through entirely peaceful means, will allow the country to move forward with free, democratic and transparent elections that will guarantee the election of a Government that respects its Constitution and promotes national integration and solidarity for each and every Honduran citizen.

At a time when communications and technology bring us closer together than ever before, we must also understand that our problems and responsibilities should also bring us closer together and that challenges to one State are challenges to all. This Assembly therefore remains the most appropriate forum in which to discuss global and local challenges, which are now identical and of concern to us all, and should also — why not? — inspire us all with hope.

Address by General Thein Sein, Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar.

General Thein Sein, Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency General Thein Sein, Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

General Thein Sein (Myanmar) (*spoke in Myanmar; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like to extend our warm congratulations to Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. I would also like to pay a special tribute to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for his able leadership of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

The global financial and economic crisis that began last year is showing tentative signs of abating. However, many countries large and small still face daunting challenges. The crisis originated in the developed countries, but the developing countries have been the hardest hit. The nascent economic recovery has yet to begin to lift the low-income countries from the trough.

It is commendable that the developed countries have played a leading role in addressing the crisis. The views of the developing countries should also be taken into consideration, together with those of the members of the Group of Eight and the Group of Twenty. Measures that could have adverse effects on the economic growth of developing countries must be avoided. The developing countries have worked long and hard to combat poverty and achieve favourable conditions for economic growth. Low-income countries require development aid beyond existing pledges of official development assistance (ODA) if they are to meet the challenges posed by the global economic downturn. The developed countries should increase their ODA to the developing countries. We welcome the reaffirmation by President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China in his statement to this Assembly that his country will increase support for other developing countries hard hit by the economic and financial crisis.

Climate change is the most pressing major threat facing our planet. It is a global challenge that requires a global response. No country can be insulated from the consequences of climate change. The rapid pace and scale of climate change requires the global community to respond immediately and effectively. The United Nations Summit on Climate Change convened by the Secretary-General last week

underlined the magnitude of the problem and the need to redouble our efforts in addressing climate change.

We look forward to the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December. We hope that the negotiations will be fruitful and result in a new agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions, to go into effect in 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period expires. To be effective, any deal must be comprehensive and consistent with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The global financial and economic crisis and the climate change crisis have compounded the problems we have faced in recent years. These include rising food prices, high energy prices and the spread of pandemic diseases. No single country can effectively overcome these problems alone. The global community must work together to meet its common challenges. In these trying times for our planet, multilateralism is more important than ever. Dialogue among nations of different religious and cultural backgrounds can contribute to international peace, security and development.

The United Nations is the single world Organization dedicated to peace and development that enjoys almost universal participation. In recent years, steps have been initiated to reform the Organization in order to make it more democratic, effective and accountable and enable it to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Regrettably, progress has been painfully slow.

If the United Nations is to make decisions in a more democratic manner, it is essential that the role of the General Assembly — in which all Member States are represented — be enhanced. Security Council reform is also important. For many years, the General Assembly has debated the matter but made little headway. In addition to the focus on the vexed issue of enlarging the Council, we would like to see constructive changes in its procedures and working methods, particularly those that would make it more transparent and accountable.

The continued existence of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, poses the greatest threat to mankind. Myanmar believes that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the sole absolute guarantee against the threat or use of those weapons. Accordingly, we have called on nuclear-weapon States to undertake a step-by-step attenuation of the nuclear threat with a view to achieving the total elimination of those weapons.

We believe that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we should pursue efforts towards the conclusion of a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. We support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the regions concerned. Nuclear-weapon-free zones enhance global and regional security and contribute to reaching the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

It is our hope that all nations of the world will continue to work together to eliminate nuclear weapons so that the power of the atom can be harnessed exclusively as a tool for the benefit of mankind and not as an instrument of self-destruction. At the same time, every nation has the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Nuclear technologies have widespread applications in such areas as food, agriculture, health care, industry and science. We welcome last week's summit meeting of the Security Council on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and its reaffirmation that the international nuclear non-proliferation regime should be maintained and strengthened to ensure the effective implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Some powerful nations have resorted to economic sanctions to pressure developing countries. Their aim is to influence the political and economic systems of those countries without taking into account those countries' historical and cultural backgrounds. Sanctions have no moral basis, as they not only hinder the economic and social development of peoples, but also interfere in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of the country concerned. As sanctions are indiscriminate and a form of violence per se, they cannot legitimately be regarded as a tool to promote human rights and democracy.

Sanctions are being employed as a political tool against Myanmar and we consider them unjust. I would like to state that such acts must cease. Myanmar practises a market economy based on agriculture. We are self-sufficient in terms of food and able to contribute to food security in the region. We have made considerable progress in improving socio-economic conditions thanks to the combined efforts of the Government and the people. Without the economic

sanctions imposed on us, progress would be even greater.

Following Cyclone Nargis, which hit Myanmar in May 2008, the Myanmar Government, the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Nations established the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) to undertake relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in the affected areas. The success of the TCG has been duly recognized by the international community and acknowledged as an exemplary mechanism for future disaster relief and rehabilitation.

The Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan (PONREPP) has been established for the period 2009 to 2011. Further plans have also been adopted to effectively respond to similar natural disasters in the future. We will implement the projects diligently. PONREPP will require $691 million over a period of three years. To date, only half of that amount has been pledged by the international community. We have carried out many rehabilitation activities relying on our own funds and resources. If more funds were forthcoming and donors fulfilled their pledges, the rehabilitation process would be speedier and more effective.

The Myanmar Government and the people of the affected areas will always be grateful to the individuals, organizations and the international community at large that came to our assistance in our hour of need.

Domestic peace and stability and the successful holding of democratic elections are essential to the democratization process in Myanmar. A new State Constitution was approved by 92.48 per cent of eligible voters in a nationwide referendum held in May 2008. Multiparty general elections will be held in the coming year. Subsequently, Parliament will be convened and a Government formed in accordance with the new Constitution.

The country will have a bicameral legislature. The Constitution provides for a presidential system of governance. It is envisaged that the President will be elected by a presidential electoral college. The State will be composed of seven states, seven regions, five self-administered zones, and one self-administered division. The capital, Nay Pyi Taw, will be designated union territory. In keeping with the State structure, the Constitution also establishes 14 State and regional legislative bodies.

The transition to democracy is proceeding. Our focus is not on the narrow interests of individuals, organizations or parties, but on the larger interests of the entire nation. We have urged all citizens, whether they agree with us or not, to participate actively in the process without losing sight of the democratic goal. In this way, the aspirations of the people will be fulfilled.

The President returned to the Chair.

The Government is taking systematic steps to hold free and fair elections. Electoral laws will be promulgated and an election commission created so that political parties can be formed and contest the elections. On 17 September 2009, 7,114 prisoners were released for good conduct. They, too, will be able to participate in the general elections next year in accordance with the law.

The holding of a multiparty general election is a significant step in our transition to a peaceful, modern and developed democratic State. Democracy cannot be imposed from the outside, and a system suitable for Myanmar can be born only out of Myanmar society. It is the citizens of Myanmar who can best determine their own future. They can judge the merits of democracy and make adjustments as they see fit. The international community can best assist Myanmar's emergence as a new nation, based on the principles of justice, freedom and equality enshrined in the new State Constitution, by demonstrating understanding.

Global issues that require the attention of all countries will increasingly come to the fore in the years to come. Firm political will and commitment of all countries will be needed to overcome the challenges. Previous speakers have emphasized the need for collective efforts to find solutions to those problems and challenges. I fully share their views and affirm that Myanmar will do its part.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar for the statement he has just made.

General Thein Sein, Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, Secretary of Foreign Relations of the United Mexican States.

Ms. Espinosa Cantellano (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since the last session of the General

Assembly, a number of crises have tested the capabilities of multilateral institutions to face them firmly and with unified purpose. The international community has come to understand that only joint action in which developing countries are full participants can offer sustainable responses to these emergencies. Fortunately, we see some positive signs of economic growth in some places.

Nevertheless, insecurity and uncertainty prevail. The insecurity results from the persistence of armed conflicts, terrorism and transnational organized crime, which threaten our achievements in sustainable human development. The uncertainty is linked to the negotiations that will lead to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December. Global warming is now a threat to humanity of incalculable proportions, to which we all contribute and for which we all, without exception, are responsible.

Contributing to sustainable human development requires, first, conditions conducive to international peace and security. As President Felipe Calderón pointed out in the Security Council summit (see S/PV.6191), nuclear proliferation and highly insufficient legal access to peaceful uses for atomic energy demand a renewed commitment to disarmament and the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime.

I also echo the emphatic call, issued by global civil society at the sixty-second Annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations, held in Mexico City this year, that we, the Governments of the world, fulfil our responsibilities to attain our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The promotion and protection of human rights constitute a universal ethical imperative and an obligation that no government can renounce. The progress attained in this field at the national level has been possible thanks to my country's close alignment with the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights, which has proved an invaluable tool for promoting improvements in our national structures.

It is clear that to attain full sustainable human development we must tackle poverty and inequality, fostering a development that ensures access for all people to adequate food, health, education and housing.

In response to the health emergency that Mexico faced some months ago with the outbreak of influenza A(H1N1), the World Health Organization gave its full support to the timely, energetic and responsible actions of my Government. This is proof that the United Nations system is capable of mobilizing coordinated action by States and avoiding unilateral measures that are not appropriate in response to such emergencies. We must continue to update our protocols for action.

For Mexico, meeting the Millennium Development Goals is a State commitment. Our priority continues to be the eradication of poverty. We must make the necessary structural changes to reduce inequality and attain prosperity for all. We must implement policies that ensure that concrete action is taken based on the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development, that the Doha Round is successfully concluded and that contributions by developed countries and multilateral development banks to projects in countries with low growth rates are increased.

It is imperative to address urgent needs such as food security in order to reduce inequality and strengthen the capacities enjoyed by our peoples. Food security is the very foundation of development. Therefore, we must ensure food security by eliminating market distortions, boosting production through the use of technology and improving productivity without making sacrifices on the environmental agenda.

The recent Group of 20 Summit in Pittsburgh demonstrated that the scale of the global financial crisis requires a firm response, both in coordinating the measures taken by individual countries to mitigate impact in areas such as unemployment and in avoiding protectionist measures. There is still much left to do, but it is a fact that the timely intervention by the Group of 20 allowed further resources to be channelled to the international financial institutions and strengthened the participation of developing countries in the decision-making bodies within those institutions.

The United Nations must realize that we are witnessing a reconfiguration of global economic governance, and that policies must be adjusted to this new reality. We require an Organization that is strong, effective and efficient. The cuts that are being imposed on all countries at home must also be reflected in United Nations system budgets. If it remains passive, alienated and conformist, our Organization risks losing

its relevance as the premier universal and legitimate forum for solving the major problems of humanity.

The challenges of global warming have made it clear that the absence of economic incentives is one of the main reasons that the commitments under the Kyoto Protocol and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have not been fulfilled. For this reason, Mexico has proposed, in the preparatory negotiations for the Copenhagen Conference, an innovative financing scheme, known as the Green Fund, which would reward the efforts of States that adopt policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, without jeopardizing their development goals. The Green Fund fully responds to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. It is not just another financial mechanism that obeys the conventional criteria.

All countries must be able to receive financing, but the scale of the contributions will result from a combination of factors that take into account, among other things, their level of development, the size of their population and the volume of their emissions. Least-developed countries will not be obliged to contribute. This initiative of President Felipe Calderón has received growing support from Member States, which reinforces the will of my Government to continue moving forward with all parties in the negotiations prior to Copenhagen.

The negotiations aimed at achieving comprehensive Security Council reform have made significant progress through a process that has heard debate on all aspects of reform and identified proposals that can garner the broadest possible consensus. We must continue negotiations towards compromise solutions which would increase the representative nature of the Council and translate into greater accountability, without jeopardizing its effectiveness.

The world has undoubtedly changed since 1945, and remains in a state of permanent mutation, as the ongoing discussions on the international economic and financial architecture demonstrate. It is absurd to argue for static institutions in a world that is anything but static.

As we presented our candidacy as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2009-2010 term, Mexico announced that it would seek to foster closer communications between Member States and the Security Council, something which is essential if the Council is to accomplish its tasks. As President of the Council during the month of April, Mexico made progress in increasing the transparency of that body by issuing information on a significant number of the Council's consultations. We will keep working to enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Council in several ways. First, we will seek to strengthen the work of the Council in preventing international crises relating to massive human rights violations and strengthening protection for the thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees. Secondly, we will seek to focus the Council's attention on preventing conflicts, and not just managing them, by incorporating in its resolutions mandates that link security with strengthened development aid and humanitarian assistance. Thirdly, we wish to make development assistance a fundamental strategy for conflict prevention and reconstruction.

The situation in Honduras has made evident the importance of continuing to improve our means in preventing actions that suspend democracy and the rule of law. We can celebrate the fact that the international community responded unanimously to the forceful interruption of constitutional order in Honduras and the ousting of President José Manuel Zelaya. Mexico, together with the majority of countries of the hemisphere, has acted within regional mechanisms, including the Rio Group, which we chair, to secure President Zelaya's return to office and that democratic order is restored based on the initiative of President Arias of Costa Rica. We issue an emphatic call to the de facto authorities to continue the dialogue with the commission established under the auspices of the Organization of American States, to abstain from any act that would endanger the inviolability of the Embassy of Brazil, where President Zelaya is located and to respect his physical safety and that of those who are with him.

Let us work together for a world that is more secure and more just, a world where in the words of the great Octavio Paz, liberty can take root — a prosperous world anchored by the rights and freedoms of individuals.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): With great pleasure I extend heartfelt congratulations to my brother, His Excellency Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, Secretary of African Union Affairs of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on his unanimous election to the high office of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. His extensive diplomatic experience and intimate knowledge of the United Nations will undoubtedly enable him to conduct the work of this session with great effectiveness.

I wish also to put on record my appreciation for the efforts of the former President of the General Assembly, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, for his able stewardship of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and for the many enlightened proposals he made during his tenure to enhance and develop the Organization.

My highest appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts to enhance the purposes and principles of the Charter and to promote the role of the Organization and enhance its efficiency in coping with new developments and responding to the emerging needs of our peoples.

Our belief in open-mindedness, tolerance, diversity, non-violence and rejection of extremism requires us first to free our minds of egoism and prejudice in order to replace conflict with dialogue, disagreements with consensus and violence with persuasion, thus broadening our alliances and outreach efforts. We must exert greater efforts to show tolerance towards those who do not necessarily share our values and ideas. Indeed, certain philosophical or argumentative issues can be tackled and resolved only if each party is open to the other, willing to coexist with the other and ready to resist preconceived ideas and stereotypes. The presence of common ground and of mutual understanding can help to create a more progressive and creative world and hence more secure, based on tolerance, constructive dialogue and human coexistence.

While the world has become a small village as distances have been effectively abolished thanks to technological advances and the communications revolution that has erased barriers and frontiers, it is still dominated by political antagonisms, as States continue to pursue conflicting individual interests. This requires us all to design pragmatic strategies for the future that safeguard everyone's interests. That can be achieved only through mindsets capable of assimilating these transformations and processing them to serve humanity and to ensure international security and stability.

It is clear that global security cannot be achieved through the sole efforts of the super-Powers, because the challenges we face are more serious, daunting and more widespread than ever before. This requires a broader global alliance of United Nations Member States as well as the support of the entire United Nations system in the interest of the international community as a whole. At the same time, it requires national strategies to address the challenges, problems and issues through close and sustained coordination among nations. The task that burdens us today requires that we discuss all the issues threatening our world, while taking into account the historical background and the particular values, ideas and traditions of our respective societies. At the same time, each party must be ready to understand and appreciate the positions and characteristics of the other and be ready to collectively fight hatred and prejudice.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has always been a melting pot of diverse civilizations, cultures, religions and races and since time immemorial has adopted the concept of tolerance and openness towards the other and coexistence; thus, we firmly believe that finding common ground between universal civilizations and cultures and building a culture of peace among peoples is necessary. In that context, the peaceful settlement of conflicts is deeply rooted in our values and our traditions, which are guided by the principles of our Islamic faith.

The Arab-Israeli conflict of the past six decades has had a great effect on our generation. It is a sad legacy that has left behind misery and human suffering, poisoned international and regional relations and continues periodically to exacerbates tension, violence and military confrontation in the Middle East. We have tried repeatedly and in vain to find a solution to this chronic conflict. To be sure, one conference after another has been held, and initiative has followed initiative. But we have been unable to deliver our message to the minds, hearts and homes of the people of the region. That is the essence of the proposal that His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Bahrain, presented in his article published in *The Washington Post* on

16 July, which makes a meaningful contribution to the adoption of a pragmatic approach to ending the conflict. His Highness wrote:

> "Our biggest mistake has been to assume that you can simply switch peace on like a light bulb. The reality is that peace is a process, contingent on a good idea but also requiring a great deal of campaigning — patiently and repeatedly targeting all relevant parties."

Careful examination of this argument reveals the correct approach to addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict, namely, directly and expeditiously communicating our Arab Peace Initiative to the Israeli people through their own information and news media. In so doing, we will be in a better position to explore the path to peace.

Today, wisdom requires that we use available communications and media technology prudently and with awareness in order to establish the channels and structures that will enable us as leaders, Governments and civil society to establish the will and momentum necessary to create an environment conducive to advancing the peace that we aspire to. Because today, dialogue has become an omnipresent issue on the global agenda of the United Nations and other international forums, as shown by the many ongoing dialogues, including the dialogue among civilizations, dialogue of cultures and the interfaith dialogue. All these processes aim at enhancing peaceful coexistence between nations and peoples and represent the principal course of action to eliminate the causes of conflict, tension and discord.

Mr. Acharya (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Middle East peace process requires that we all exert greater political and diplomatic efforts in order to achieve the two-State solution — Israel and Palestine — as part of a comprehensive and just settlement based on equal security for all the nations of the Middle East region. We believe that the failure to end this conflict is due simply to the lack of a methodology based on justice and balance and to the absence of a binding implementation mechanism. We are all aware that the Arab side went to great lengths to make it clear that it supports peace as an irreversible strategic option.

The Arab Peace Initiative unequivocally confirmed that position. We therefore expect the international community, and particularly the most influential leading Powers, to exert effective pressure on Israel to freeze and eventually dismantle all settlements established in the territories occupied in 1967, to ensure demarcation of the borders of the Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital, peacefully coexisting with Israel, and to withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan and Lebanese territories, in conformity with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy and the requirements of the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Here I would like to commend the speech of President Barack Obama, delivered from this very rostrum, which we consider a frame of reference for the resumption of the Middle East peace process. President Obama explicitly affirmed the need to relaunch negotiations on final status issues — notably, security for both Israelis and Palestinians, boundaries, refugees and Jerusalem — rejected the continued illegitimate Israeli settlement activity in Palestinian territories and called for the creation of a contiguous and viable Palestinian State.

Among the other challenges and concerns confronting our region is the question of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and the Gulf region. The Iranian nuclear programme is undoubtedly among the causes for this common concern; nonetheless, it should be dealt with in such a way as to spare our region the threat of confrontation. This can best be achieved through diplomatic means. It is in that spirit that the Kingdom of Bahrain, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1887 (2009), renews its call on the international community to actively work towards making the Middle East, including the Gulf region, a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, thus ensuring the security and well-being of the peoples of the region and the world at large, and to call upon Israel to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in order to achieve its universality. All nuclear facilities and activities in the Middle East should be placed under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards, while acknowledging the legitimate right of States to possess nuclear technology for peaceful uses in the areas where it has become vital for development and the diversification of energy sources, in conformity with relevant international agreements.

Other important regional issues are also a matter of concern to us. Foremost among these is the situation in brotherly Iraq, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity it is important to affirm, while not interfering in its internal affairs. We should also condemn all terrorist activities perpetrated against Iraq with a view to destabilizing its security and rekindling sectarian hatred there.

Also, in order to build confidence between the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Iran, it is imperative to reach a settlement on the question of the occupied islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, through either direct negotiations or referral to the International Court of Justice. We also reaffirm the need for joint international and regional efforts to assist brotherly Yemen, under the supervision of the United Nations, in coping with the heavy refugee burden and focusing on its development efforts and the restoration of security and stability throughout its territory. Similarly, we stress the importance of preserving peace, stability and unity in the brotherly Sudan and we look forward to the cooperation of all relevant parties to resolve the Darfur issue and to achieve the desired peace.

We urge the international community to shoulder its responsibilities regarding security in Somalia, whose internal troubles and fragile central Government have led to the spread of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, much to the detriment of international navigation and trade. Also, the Kingdom of Bahrain once again reaffirms its consistent position concerning the sovereignty of the brotherly Kingdom of Morocco over the its entire national territory and calls on the international community to support the negotiation process initiated by the Security Council, to maintain its momentum and activate it.

With peace and development the twin concerns of our world, it is only natural to feel frustration in the face of the prevailing environmental degradation, pandemics, desertification, poverty, water scarcity, depletion of the ozone layer, climate change and the world financial crisis. These challenges represent an imminent threat both to our life now and to that of future generations. It is therefore no overstatement to say that in the twenty-first century our destinies are intertwined, and that we need to redouble our collective efforts to address these universal dangers that daily threaten humanity and its health, food and security.

In this regard, the Kingdom of Bahrain, in cooperation with the United Nations and in the presence of the Secretary-General, hosted in May the launch of the 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. The report deals with issues pertaining to the protection of lives and property in natural disaster situations related to global warming, earthquakes, floods and rising sea levels. We hope that the major industrial countries will play a key role in forging an agreement at December's Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, with a view to curbing harmful greenhouse gas emissions. It is our hope that the necessary political will can be mustered to respond to this threat to humanity and to make our world safer and more sustainable.

In this context, the Kingdom of Bahrain, in its capacity as a small island developing State, wishes to express great concern at the evident causal relation between climate change and rising sea levels, which poses a serious threat to our world. We are in agreement with the other small island developing States in their concern over the adverse impact of the increase in average global temperature.

In conclusion, the gravity that characterizes our present session, as exemplified by the responsible discussions in the first week, notably at the 22 September Summit on Climate Change and the 24 September Security Council summit (see S/PV.6181), reconfirms our need to return to the spirit of the Charter: that the United Nations is the principal forum for multilateral cooperation to address a wide range of contemporary issues. The United Nations as an institution is not limited merely to the maintenance of international peace and security. Rather, it is the principal forum for the coordination of positions and efforts aimed at addressing the challenges threatening human beings and their environment, alleviating poverty, controlling pandemics and settling conflicts and wars through dialogue, negotiations and other peaceful means in a world guided by tolerance, peaceful coexistence and security for current and future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his election to the presidency and reiterate our confidence in his ability to conduct our work and our deliberations successfully. I would also like to recognize the excellent leadership of Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the Assembly at its previous session. The ethical dimension and political scope of his presidency have enabled us to move forward towards the goal of restoring to this Assembly all its powers, and will stand as a benchmark for the future. Thanks to his example, it has become even clearer to us now that reforming the United Nations is about democratizing it and bringing it closer to the people.

Since the general debate of one year ago important events have occurred in the international arena. Climate change is now more visible and dangerous. The economic crisis has become intense and global. Social exclusion has increased.

However, the international community reacted with profound optimism to the change of Government in the United States. It seemed that a period of extreme aggressiveness, unilateralism and arrogance in the foreign policy of that country had come to an end and the infamous legacy of the George W. Bush regime had crumbled in repudiation. As those in this very Hall can attest, novel and conciliatory words from the White House raised great hopes, and the world welcomed his repeated messages of change, dialogue and cooperation. Unfortunately, time goes by, and those words do not seem to be supported by concrete facts. The words do not coincide with reality.

The most serious and dangerous aspect of this new situation is the uncertainty about the real capacity of the present authorities in Washington to overpower the sweeping political and ideological currents that threatened the world under the previous Administration. The neoconservative groups that placed George Bush in the presidency — the powers that promoted the use of force and domination under the protection of the colossal military and economic strength of the United States and that are to blame for crimes including torture, assassination and the manipulation of the American people — have quickly regrouped and retain immense resources of power and influence, contrary to the change proclaimed.

The detention and torture centre at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base — which usurps Cuban territory — has not been shut down. The occupation troops in Iraq have not been withdrawn. The war in Afghanistan is expanding and is threatening other States.

As for Cuba, which has suffered American aggression for half a century, last April the new United States Government announced measures to abolish some of the Bush Administration's most brutal actions that prohibited contact between Cubans living in the United States and their relatives in Cuba, particularly the possibility to visit them and to send assistance without limitations. These measures are a positive step, but they are extremely limited and insufficient.

The announced measures included authorizing American companies to carry out certain telecommunications operations with Cuba, but other restrictions that prevent the implementation of those operations have not been modified. Nor has there been any sign that the United States Government is ready to put an end to the immoral practice — which has recently increased — of misappropriating Cuban funds frozen in American banks, as well as other goods, under the protection of venal judges who violate their own laws.

The essential fact is that the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba remains in place. The United States President, despite the existence of laws such as the Helms-Burton Act, still has broad executive powers, such as the granting of licenses, by means of which he could modify the implementation of the blockade.

If there were a true desire for change, the United States Government could authorize the export of Cuban goods and services to the United States and vice versa. The United States could allow Cuba to buy anywhere in the world products comprised of more than 10 per cent American components or technology, regardless of trademark or country of origin. The United States Department of the Treasury could refrain from pursuing, freezing and confiscating third-country transfers in United States dollars and other currencies to Cuban nationals or entities. Washington could lift the ban preventing third-country vessels from docking at any American port until 180 days after calling at any Cuban port. The Treasury Department's persecution of financial institutions and companies that trade with or

carry out operations in Cuba could also be suspended. President Obama could allow American citizens, by means of a license, to travel to Cuba — the only country in the world they are not allowed to visit.

The Secretary-General's report to the Assembly (A/64/97) abounds with examples. In the course of 2009 numerous fines, confiscations and other hindrances have been levelled at trade carried out by Cuba or by third countries with Cuba. As the United States Treasury Department itself has reported, since January this year almost half of the funds collected by its Office of Foreign Assets Control came from sanctions imposed on American and foreign companies for alleged violations of the economic blockade against Cuba.

The true and indisputable fact is that the new American Government continues to ignore the international community's overwhelming appeal, expressed in this Assembly year after year, to put an end to the blockade of Cuba. Two weeks ago President Obama instructed the Secretaries of State and the Treasury that, contrary to what is reflected in all American opinion polls, "it is in the national interest" to maintain economic sanctions against Cuba under the Trading with the Enemy Act — a law enacted in 1917 to address wartime situations and which is today applied only to Cuba. The United States blockade of Cuba is an act of unilateral aggression that should be unilaterally terminated.

For many years Cuba has expressed its willingness to normalize relations with the United States. On 1 August 2009, President Raúl Castro Ruz publicly reiterated Cuba's readiness to participate in a respectful dialogue, between equals, with the United States — a dialogue that assumes our independence, sovereignty and self-determination. He emphasized that we should mutually respect our differences and that Cuba does not recognize that the Government of that or any other country, or any other group of States, has any jurisdiction over our internal affairs.

The Government of Cuba has suggested to the United States Government a set of essential topics it considers must necessarily be discussed during a future dialogue aimed at improving relations. Those topics include the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade; the removal of Cuba from the spurious list of terrorist countries; the revocation of the Cuban Adjustment Act and of the "wet foot, dry foot" policy; compensation for economic and human damages; the return of the territory occupied by the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base; the end of all radio and television aggression from United States territory against Cuba; and the cessation of American funding of domestic subversion.

An essential item on that agenda is the release of the five Cuban anti-terrorism fighters who have been unjustly imprisoned in the United States for 11 years. President Obama has the constitutional prerogatives to free them as an act of justice and of his Government's commitment against terrorism.

The President returned to the Chair.

Furthermore, we have proposed to the United States to begin talks on setting up cooperation to tackle drug trafficking, terrorism and human smuggling, protect the environment and address natural disasters. In that spirit, the Cuban Government has held talks with that of the United States on migration and on the establishment of direct postal services. Those talks have been courteous and useful.

Cuba enjoys extensive and fruitful relations in all parts of the world. With the single exception of the United States, Cuba has friendly relations with all countries of this hemisphere and counts on the solidarity of the region. We cooperate with dozens of countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Ours is a stable country with a united, cultured and healthy people who have amply proven that, even under an embargo, they are capable of facing the consequences of the global economic crisis and the effects of climate change, which last year cost the national economy 20 per cent of its gross domestic product.

Conditions in Cuba are such that it can face its own problems and find solutions to them. We do so in a just and fair society that relies on its own efforts and has been able to advance and guide its development in the most adverse conditions. We are ready to continue facing those challenges calmly and patiently, confident that no citizen has been or will be abandoned and certain that we are defending a cause of national independence and a socialist plan that have the huge support of the Cubans. Anyone who tries to stop the revolution and bend the will of the Cuban people is suffering from delusions. Patriotism, social justice and

the resolve to defend independence are all part of our national identity.

Latin America and the Caribbean are in a dramatic situation, characterized by the sharp contradiction between the large majorities — which, together with progressive Governments and broad social movements, are demanding justice and fairness — and the traditional oligarchies committed to preserving their privileges. The coup d'état in Honduras demonstrates that. Those who participated in the coup and the usurpers who kidnapped the legitimate President of that country are violating the constitution and brutally repressing the people, as happened in the dark years of the military dictatorships in Latin America propped up by the United States. Hundreds of thousands of assassinated, missing and tortured persons are stirring the conscience of our America in the face of impunity.

It has still not been explained why the plane that kidnapped the constitutional President of Honduras made a stopover at the American Palmerola air base. The American fascist right, which Cheney symbolizes, openly supports and defends the coup. President José Manuel Zelaya must be fully, immediately and unconditionally reinstated to the execution of his constitutional duties. The inviolability of the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa must be respected and the siege of and the attacks on its property must stop. The Honduran people are valiantly resisting and will have the last word.

Those events coincide with the renewed and aggressive interest of the United States in setting up military bases in Latin America and in re-establishing the Fourth Fleet, clearly with the aim of putting the region within only a few hours' reach of American troops, threatening the revolutionary and progressive movements, in particular the Bolivarian revolution in the sister nation of Venezuela, and gaining control of the region's oil and other natural resources.

The slander and lies against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela are brutal. It should be recalled that it was thus when atrocious aggression emerged and was instigated against our fatherland. The broader and clearer the policy towards that sister nation, the more it will contribute to the peace, independence and development of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Latin America and the Caribbean can advance and, to a certain extent, are moving forward to new and higher forms of integration. They have more water, land, forests and mineral and energy resources than any other region of the planet. Their population exceeds 570 million. The Rio Group, the Latin American and Caribbean Summit on Integration and Development and the Union of South American Nations are bodies set up by virtue of the ties that unite us. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas and the Petrocaribe cooperation scheme are prime examples.

The optimistic forecasts from Pittsburgh on the progression of the global economic crisis, which predict a possible economic recovery early next year, are not based on solid data and, at best, only indicate relief from collapse for a very limited group of the world's most powerful economies. It is worth noting that objectives have been set but not a word has been said about how to achieve them.

No one should forget that what is involved is an unprecedented crisis of the capitalist system that encompasses the respective food, energy, ecological, social and financial crises. Nor should we overlook the danger of debt combined with inflation, of the bursting of other financial bubbles, or of a second collapse. The developing countries are not to blame, but are the victims of the consequences of the unreasonable and unsustainable model of consumption, exploitation and speculation, the attack on the environment and the corruption in the industrialized economies.

While the debates go on, the number of hungry people will reach a record figure of 1,020 million in 2009 — a sixth of the world's population. This year, another 90 million will be cast into poverty and 50 million others into unemployment. During these months, another 400,000 children are expected to die as a result of the crisis.

The measures that have been adopted are only palliative ones that perpetuate the serious deficiencies of an unjust, exclusive and ecologically unsustainable international economic system. We need a fully comprehensive and inclusive international dialogue with the active participation of all developing countries. We need to establish a new international economic order based on solidarity, justice, equality and sustainable development. The international financial architecture should be founded anew. The

United Nations, particularly this General Assembly, is called upon to play a key role in this endeavour.

In conclusion, I reiterate Cuba's gratitude for the traditional and invaluable solidarity it has received from this General Assembly in its struggle against aggression and the blockade. Today, that solidarity remains as indispensable as ever.

As Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz said from this very rostrum nine years ago:

> "Nothing in the existing economic and political order serves the interests of humankind. Thus this order is unsustainable and must be changed. Suffice it to say that the world has already more than 6 billion inhabitants, 80 per cent of whom live in poverty. Ages-old diseases of the third world — diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and others equally lethal — have not been eradicated, while new epidemics like AIDS threaten to exterminate the population of entire nations ... Meanwhile, wealthy countries keep devoting enormous amounts of money to military expenses and to buy luxury items, and a voracious plague of speculators exchange currencies, stocks and other real or fictitious values for trillions of dollars every day.
>
> "Nature is being devastated. The climate is changing under our own eyes, and drinking water is increasingly contaminated or scarce. The seas, a source of human sustenance, are being depleted, and crucial non-renewable resources are being wasted on luxury and vanities ...
>
> "The dream of having truly fair and sensible norms to guide human destiny seems impossible to many. However, we are convinced that the struggle for the impossible should be the motto of this institution that brings us together today." (*A/55/PV.4, p. 20*)

Despite everything, the fiftieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution is being celebrated victoriously and with pride.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Abdallah (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, and through you to the brotherly Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya our sincere congratulations upon your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. We are confident that your broad experience and many skills will help enrich our work at this session and achieve the objectives to which we all aspire. Our high appreciation goes also to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the previous session.

I also express our warmest thanks and appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts in the service of world peace and security to promote the role of the United Nations, achieve our common noble objectives and find effective solutions to various international problems.

Today our world is witnessing profound and rapid changes that have added new dimensions to international relations, which in turn have altered the balances and equations that have long governed those relations. These changes have generated major challenges at various levels, requiring all parties to shoulder their responsibilities with vision and wisdom and to enhance their efforts to establish the foundations of a safer, more stable and more developed world and of balanced and equitable international relations based on solidarity.

We must redouble our efforts to reform the United Nations, which was designed decades ago, in order to update it to current global circumstances and enable it to carry out its essential role in maintaining international peace, security and development, and in serving the interests of world solidarity.

Global circumstances have changed since the creation of the United Nations. Its present structure and equations no longer reflect the reality of the world situation and international relations. Given our concern for justice and balance in international relations, we hope that the international community will introduce the necessary reforms to the United Nations system, in particular in the context of expanding the Security Council and increasing the transparency and efficiency of its work, while bearing in mind need for the broadest possible consensus among States on pending issues.

In spite of its complex and interrelated nature, the world situation can only strengthen our attachment to the United Nations and to its founding principles. Those principles constitute the ideal framework for coordinating and uniting our efforts to address issues

and challenges in the implementation of the noble principles enshrined in the Charter, finding effective solutions to pending issues, mitigating the impact of the economic and social crisis, and promoting solidarity-based frameworks of partnership and cooperation, in keeping with a more comprehensive approach based on the close correlation between peace, security and development.

Further rapprochement and solidarity among the nations of the world remain, in our view, among the noblest aims of the United Nations and a pillar of the new system of international relations. Therefore, today more than ever before, we must further disseminate the culture of tolerance, dialogue and acceptance of the other and respect for cultural differences and religious symbols. We must build constructive relations among States and peoples, based on moderation and the rejection of extremism, violence and fanaticism of any kind.

For many years now, Tunisia has promoted initiatives to give effect to that noble objective, the most recent of which was "Kairouan, Capital of Islamic Culture for the Year 2009", organized with the cooperation of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Globalization, with its numerous problems and major challenges, requires us to pay close attention to our young people and to constantly listen to their concerns in order to protect them from exclusion, marginalization and the dangers of seclusion, extremism, carelessness and estrangement, while at the same time instilling in them a culture of tolerance, compromise and moderation.

Based on the special status that we reserve for our young people, whom we consider to be our true wealth, the support of the present and foundation of the future, we in Tunisia have insisted on entrenching the spirit of responsibility within this group and encourage them to participate actively in all aspects of public life and in establishing the country's future policies and objectives.

Based on this vision and our experience in dealing with our youth and its aspirations, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali called for the proclamation of 2010 as the International Year of Youth and for the convening. under United Nations auspices and in cooperation with the relevant international organizations, of a world youth conference to be attended by young people from all over the world and to conclude with the drafting of an international pact uniting world youth around universal values.

We strongly hope that this initiative will contribute to deepening awareness of the position of young people in society so that they become active stakeholders in the success of our development processes. Furthermore, young people should play a major role in promoting dialogue and in enhancing understanding and mutual respect among peoples on the basis of universal values and noble human principles concerning which all cultures and civilizations agree — values such as tolerance, moderation and respect of the other; rejection of all forms of violence, extremism and discrimination; the culture of citizenship, solidarity, peace and communication; stimulation of the spirit of initiative; volunteerism and environmental protection.

This initiative already enjoys the support of Arab, African and Islamic regional organizations as well as the Non-Aligned Movement. We look forward to your support, Mr. President, for the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly at this session in order to give concrete expression to this initiative.

Terrorism remains a major threat to world peace, security and development, in spite of numerous national and international efforts to counter it. It remains a challenge to the international community, and we have on numerous occasions called for a comprehensive approach in addressing a danger that spares no one. We must take into consideration the root causes of such phenomena, as well as just and sustainable solutions to ongoing world problems. We must work to decrease poverty, exclusion and marginalization, and we must confront extremist movements that favour fanaticism, seclusion and hatred.

As one of the first countries to warn against the dangers of this phenomenon in the early 1990s, Tunisia renews its call for the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to craft a universally binding code of conduct to fight terrorism.

Faithful to its identity and keen to ensure its full integration into its community, Tunisia strives tirelessly and resolutely to enhance cooperation with its partners in various regional affiliations. In the firm

belief that the Arab Maghreb Union is an indispensable strategic choice for the interests of the Maghreb peoples and will enhance the regional and international status of its members in a world where blocs and groupings are proliferating, Tunisia has spared no effort, together with other Maghreb countries, to complete the process of building the Union, promote common Maghreb action and work to overcome the temporary difficulties that are preventing its materialization. We seek thereby to ensure that the Union enjoys the position it deserves on the international scene and to increase the capacity of its member States to meet present and future challenges.

Tunisia also continues to work to promote common Arab action, revitalize its mechanisms, develop cooperation and partnership relations with sister Arab States in various fields, and bring about the desired Arab economic integration and complementarity.

Many international problems, particularly in the Middle East, remain unresolved and are a source of deep concern for the international community, with negative consequences for security and stability in the region and the world. From this rostrum, we reaffirm Tunisia's constant and principled support for the just Palestinian cause and the brotherly Palestinian people in their struggle to recover their legitimate rights and to establish their independent State on their own land.

We note with satisfaction the positive stance of the United States Administration on the Middle East issue, the elements of a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict, the two-State solution, and subsequent international efforts and momentum to revive the peace talks.

Today, we renew our appeal to the international community, especially the sponsors of the peace process, to intensify their efforts so as to compel Israel to end its settlement policy, without preconditions, thus enabling talks between the Palestinian and Israeli sides to resume, in accordance with international resolutions, all peace terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Achieving peace and ensuring security and stability in the Middle East will require Israel to lift the blockade, dismantle the roadblocks and abandon its humiliating measures and other provocative steps against the Palestinians, as well as the recovery by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights, the establishment of its independent State, and Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and the Lebanese lands that remain under Israeli occupation.

We also express our solidarity with the brotherly Iraqi people and hope that they will overcome the difficulties they still face, achieve national reconciliation and consolidate security and stability so that all Iraqis can devote themselves to the reconstruction of their country in a spirit of unity and accord.

The hotspots of tension and conflict in many regions of Africa, some of which persist, have devastated the continent, sapped its energies and potential, jeopardized its development, slowed its growth and negatively affected its societies.

Faced with this situation and given the necessarily comprehensive nature of any approach to world peace and security, the international community and the United Nations organs, first and foremost the Security Council, must support the efforts of the African Union and its member States and stand with the African peoples as they seek to restore security and stability and to overcome the effects of conflict and war.

Given the organic relationship between peace, security and development, and the world's pressing need to reinvigorate the values of cooperation and solidarity, Tunisia proposed an initiative that was adopted by the General Assembly in December 2002 to create the World Solidarity Fund to fight poverty and lay the foundations of solidarity-based development. Today we renew our call to operationalize the Fund, thus enabling it to assist developing countries, particularly those in Africa.

On a different level, and taking into consideration the rich and long-standing political, economic, social and cultural links between Tunisia and Europe, our country is ever keen to strengthen its relations with all the States of that sphere. Tunisia's relations with the European Union have seen tangible progress, thanks to both sides' determination to upgrade their ties to the level of advanced partnership, thus opening prospects for enhanced cooperation in all fields and enabling our country to achieve further integration with its regional and international environment.

The Euro-Mediterranean region remains one of the main focuses of Tunisia's foreign policy. On the basis of our strong belief in the importance of building

a secure, stable and prosperous Mediterranean region on a foundation of equal partnership and mutual interests, we support initiatives and mechanisms to consolidate peace and promote development. From this perspective, Tunisia is determined to play an active role in ensuring the success of Mediterranean cooperation for the benefit of the peoples of the region.

Tunisia is also working to strengthen its ties of friendship and to broaden and enrich its cooperation with American and Asian States through the establishment of a solidarity-based partnership. We are thus laying the groundwork for a new era in these relations that will secure the interests of all sides, bring them together, consolidate conditions of peace and stability, and achieve further progress and prosperity around the world.

The peoples of the world today urgently need a clean environment and all States must preserve it in order to avoid the severe consequences of which much research and many studies have warned, as climate change has caused huge economic losses to the international community.

Seeking to meet the environmental, economic and social challenges caused by climate change, in November 2007 Tunisia hosted the International Solidarity Conference on Climate Change Strategies for the African and Mediterranean Regions. Our country also hosted the African regional meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in order to develop a unified African position and garner support for African States that are negatively affected by desertification and land deterioration, as well as to promote scientific research in this field.

Tunisia has spared neither effort nor energy over the past two decades to join the ranks of developed countries, based on an open-minded and forward-looking vision, the foundations of which were laid by President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. This vision has encompassed all fields — political, economic, social and development — and been implemented via thorough reforms to strengthen democracy and the culture of human rights in word and deed, and through the expansion of public freedoms and the participation of all sectors of Tunisian society in charting the country's political course within the frameworks of the rule of law and institutions.

I reiterate in conclusion that our success in securing development and promoting relations of cooperation among all States is closely linked to an international environment characterized by security, stability and justice.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): Let me begin by congratulating our sisterly country the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and you personally, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. I express our confidence that your long-standing diplomatic skills and leadership will lead us to a successful conclusion of the session. I wish to assure you of the full support of the delegation of the State of Eritrea in the realization of this mission.

Permit me also to seize this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, for the very able and effective manner in which he led the affairs of the Assembly.

Likewise, we commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continuous efforts to administer the affairs of the United Nations, and especially for convening the Summit on Climate Change last week.

The General Assembly is holding its annual general debate for 2009 at a very critical juncture. One year after the world financial and economic crisis began, this gathering provides us with another opportunity for reflection.

The Hall in which we meet today and the lofty purposes for which it was built have both outlived their time. This body was conceived in another era to address the challenges of the world order prevailing after the First and Second World Wars. Therefore, it cannot realistically cope with the demands of the twenty-first century. From an objective point of view, the United Nations should have embarked on a process of transformation 20 years ago, in concurrence with the end of the cold war. By now, it should have been replaced by a reformed Organization fit to address the challenges of the century we live in and beyond.

The calls to re-engineer this renewed Organization have not been few. Two decades have passed without any meaningful results in the direction

of substantive reform. The financial and economic crisis and the global awareness that it has spawned are mere symptoms of the consequences of inaction at the cost of reform.

The prevailing world order has not succeeded in guaranteeing the peace and security of our planet, in spite of all the intentions that brought forth its creation and of the harsh lessons learned from the two World Wars. On the contrary, this ageing world order has been hijacked to serve the interests of the few, opening the door to a myriad of ramifications.

Financial institutions have been left to operate unrestrained by restrictions or regulations. Economic structures that pillage the resources and wealth of peoples and nations have been consolidated. Illegitimate military and coercive blunders have been allowed to fester unchecked. The exploitation of war and those who help spread it have been honed in a purposeful manner. The number of people suffering from poverty and hunger has not been reduced; it has rather multiplied many times over. Violent extremism has not received the attention it deserves; rather, it has been further fuelled and manipulated as a pretext and excuse for ulterior motives. A culture of the politics of fear and management by crisis has been nurtured, exploited and established as a norm. Indeed, world peace and security have been imperilled beyond measure. The United Nations itself has been one of the victims of this world order. Evidence to this effect is known to us all and is well documented.

Reform and change are long overdue. Despite fervent calls for reform by the international community, the few who control our outdated world order are unfortunately not attuned to the notion of change. They have instead regarded crises and suffering as ordinary historical imperatives. To this end, they have resisted all attempts to introduce change and, through their clout, influence and advantages, have been able to block it. Thus, no real reform has occurred so far.

In this global maelstrom, where even the peoples of the developed countries have been adversely affected, none have been more exposed to harm than the marginalized in Africa. We, the peoples of Africa, have been victims of poverty and hunger, models of backwardness, and metaphors for diseases and epidemics. And the continent has become a breeding ground for crises and conflicts.

In this regard, the most urgent concern is the fact that special-interest groups have rendered Africans paralysed. Hence, instead of resolving our own problems, we find ourselves mired in poverty, hunger and disease rather than actively striving to achieve development and growth. Similarly, when it comes to the resolution of crises and conflicts, Africans find themselves dependent on the goodwill of others.

However, criticism cannot be reserved only for the special-interest groups that steer the prevailing world order; it must also be apportioned to those groups that serve as their instruments and partners. Indeed, the role of Africa in this body, as well as in other international organizations, can best be described as inconsequential. The evidence for this unfortunate situation is also well documented.

If world peace and security are to be preserved, justice and human rights respected, hunger eradicated, and economic development and growth made to benefit the majority in a sustainable fashion, the implementation of fundamental change in this Organization and other international bodies should not be left to the goodwill of the few. The change needed to transform this outdated world order into a new one must not be limited to reform; it should be solid, genuine and capable of bringing peace, security and prosperity to coming generations. Reform should not be limited to increasing the number of seats in the Security Council. It should, rather, steer our world away from its dangerous downhill path, controlled by a powerful few, and redirect it towards one that ensures the safety of all.

Though this is the ideal to which the world's peoples aspire and strive for, the African continent, for obvious and particular reasons, needs to expend more effort to achieve it. But beyond all the good wishes, the fundamental reform we are waiting for requires collective commitment. On this auspicious occasion, it would not do simply to dwell on various current events or those consequences spawned by the fundamental flaws of the world order. Doing so would only confuse and distort the bigger picture. I have therefore chosen not to address important issues concerning the Horn of Africa and Eritrea's specific problem of the illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territory, which is already in the records of the United Nations awaiting responsible and urgent action.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al-Moualem (Syria) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate the fraternal Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and you personally, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. I wish you success in your endeavours, and succeed you will, given your vast experience and competence.

I also extend our deep appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for successfully steering the work of the sixty-third session; I recognize his positive stand vis-à-vis the fundamental issues with which the international community is seized. I also wish the Secretary-General every success in his undertakings as he seeks to fulfil the purposes and principles of our international Organization.

We come here every year and stress from this very rostrum, as do many others, that the Middle East is one of the most tense regions of the world and that the situation is extremely ominous. From this very rostrum, most speakers stress that a just and comprehensive peace is an urgent requirement for the realization of the interests of all parties in the region and the world at large. However, paying lip service to the need for peace is obviously different from working for peace. Actions inside and outside the region have spoken louder than words, and peace has remained elusive for years.

During that time, Israel waged two devastating wars against Lebanon and Gaza. It had no qualms about committing internationally prohibited acts or breaching international law, encouraged and protected by the Administration of former United States President Bush. To date, Israel continues to impose a stifling siege on Gaza, in contravention of the most basic humanitarian principles and tenets of international humanitarian law. These facts have been confirmed by many investigations, and were most recently published in the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. The head of the Mission concluded that Israel had committed grave violations of human rights law, and international humanitarian law, including war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.

The international approach to the Middle East question has changed in previous years. Addressing this issue has become a priority, and has been followed by immediate action on the ground. This is certainly reassuring. It is our sincere hope that these efforts will bear fruit. But the engagement by the new United States Administration, the members of the Security Council, the European Union, the Organization for the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement has been continuously confronted with Israeli measures and positions that ignore the most basic underpinnings of the peace process. Israel defies the policies of its friends and allies and undermines their will. Israel also challenges the will of the overwhelming majority — if not the entirety — of the international community. Perhaps more than ever before, Israel has now revealed its true colours: an entity that has enshrined racism, aggression and tension-building while balking at peace and repudiating the advocates of peace.

Israel refuses to freeze illegitimate settlement building and is thus in breach of its obligations under international law. Israel continues to confiscate Palestinian land, build the apartheid wall, Judaize Jerusalem, expel inhabitants from their homes and bring in settlers to replace them. This list is in no way exhaustive. These facts are substantiated by figures but, in the interest of time, we shall not dwell on them in detail. Suffice it to say that the two-State solution advocated by the international community has been rejected by the Israeli Government. The Israeli Prime Minister's comments on the subject are sheer tactical manoeuvres that are contradicted entirely by the policies pursued by his Government on the ground.

President Bashar Al-Assad has said that peace is antithetical to occupation. Peace and occupation cannot coexist. He stressed that we in Syria seek a just and comprehensive peace and that peace is our strategic choice. It is a choice based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. We have supported every effort aimed at achieving this goal. To that end, we entered into indirect talks with Israel through Turkish mediation and sought to arrive at common ground that would ultimately enable us to launch direct negotiations. But the absence of genuine political will to make peace and the war of aggression that the Israeli Government waged against Gaza brought this pursuit to a halt.

In full view of the world and in defiance of its unanimous will, Israel has chosen to be a rejectionist State. It has chosen to challenge the international community. This is a dangerous position and a stance that threatens peace and security in the region. The continued occupation, the Judaization of Jerusalem, the intensification of settlement activities and the racist slogans presage serious consequences for the world. The world must not succumb to the dictates of Israeli extremists. It must not allow Israel to persist in its violation of international law and its defiance of international will and decisions.

Brotherly Iraq continues to bleed. The situation in Iraq is a cause for serious concern to us as a neighbouring Arab country. We have continuously stressed the urgency of preserving the unity of Iraq's territory and people while guaranteeing its sovereignty and safeguarding its independence and its Arab-Islamic identity. To that end, it is urgent to build Iraqi national unity on the basis of national reconciliation, which must include Iraqis of all stripes. Iraqi national unity is the cornerstone of the reconciliation process, but it will remain elusive unless the necessary conditions for national reconciliation are achieved.

We have continuously condemned all aggressive acts that claim the lives of innocent victims in Iraq. We have also repeatedly called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq and for the restoration of full Iraqi independence and sovereignty. We have stressed our readiness to facilitate that withdrawal by extending our cooperation in maintaining security in Iraq. It is our hope that Iraqis will soon be able to arrive, through constructive dialogue, at solutions that firmly support Iraq's unity, strength and prosperity while remaining fully dedicated and loyal to the unity of the land of Iraq and its people.

Syria has been dedicated to strengthening bilateral Syrian-Iraqi relations in all their aspects. We established a bilateral council for strategic cooperation in various fields. We were distressed by the recent "Bloody Wednesday" terrorist bombings in Baghdad, which we strongly condemn. But we were surprised to hear, days later, accusations levelled at us — accusations devoid of any truth — implying that we harboured those suspected of masterminding those bombings. These claims and the ensuing developments are extremely unfortunate and cannot serve the interests of Iraq or Syria.

We are open to suggestions on how to solve the current crisis by demanding that real evidence be made available to substantiate those claims. This has not yet been done. We stress that protecting the Iraqi people and safeguarding their interests is one of our priorities. We are also keen to safeguard the fraternal relations between the Iraqi and Syrian peoples and express our satisfaction at the current efforts of Turkey and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

We have followed with grave concern the recent developments in Yemen. We hope that security will ultimately prevail. We support Yemen's unity, stability and the prosperity of its people.

Attempts to undermine the Sudan's unity and to compromise its security and sovereignty are also a cause of concern for us. We fully support the Sudan and its leadership and stress the need to create favourable conditions conducive to a settlement of all pending issues. In that regard, we appreciate the efforts made by the State of Qatar in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the African Union.

Another cause for concern is the events unfolding in Somalia, a country already afflicted by war and internal strife. We call on our brothers there to work for national reconciliation and to use dialogue as a means of settling their differences. We urge them to work towards the unity of Somalia, which as the supreme national interest should take precedence over any other consideration, and to lay the foundations for security and stability in their country.

We support the efforts of the African Union to settle the existing conflicts that continue to plague some parts of the African continent, to achieve development in the countries of Africa and to promote the African role in the international system.

We also renew our call for the lifting of the blockade imposed on Cuba for more than half a century.

For years, Syria has been calling for the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region. To this end, Syria tabled a draft resolution before the Security Council in 2003 calling for the establishment of such a zone. Today Syria stresses the need for Israel to commit to complying with the resolution of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adopted on 18 September of this year regarding Israeli nuclear

capabilities (GC(53)/RES/17), in which the Agency called upon Israel to place its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We recall once again the right of all States to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, as guaranteed by the NPT. We fully support constructive dialogue as a means to settle all differences.

The world is still reeling from a crippling economic and financial crisis that has adversely affected the economic and social conditions of most countries of the world. Very few countries, if any, have been spared its devastating effects. This crisis led many to question its root causes, shedding light on the deficiencies in the financial system and its practices and thus highlighting the sound practices that could have prevented the crisis. The world cannot deal with the crisis as a fait accompli. We must seek answers and outcomes that endorse sound practices and remedy systemic imbalances that are bound to affect us all in the globalized world in which we live. Our common goal is to establish a more secure economic and financial world order.

It goes without saying that the countries of the South have disparate economies and are comparatively more disadvantaged and adversely affected by the current crisis than those of the North. The world's poor end up paying a higher price for a breakdown that is not of their making. Rich States are therefore duty bound to provide all forms of support to poorer countries to help them overcome this crisis. Poor countries have earned this support, and any positive results that it generates will serve the interests of poor and rich countries alike. We also call for the increased participation of developing countries in the work of the Group of 20, which would enable them to put forward proposals and advance appropriate responses to overcome the crisis.

We and many others have often called for an enhanced and reinvigorated role for the United Nations in order to build a better, more just and more secure world. We believe that the present moment is auspicious. We therefore call on all Member States to work seriously to ensure compliance with the Charter of our international Organization and to introduce the necessary reforms in order to promote it, learning from the lessons of past decades and from our achievements and failures. We sincerely look forward to a world governed by respect for international law in which security, stability and prosperity reign supreme.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Republic of the Niger.

Ms. Mindaoudou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of the Niger — which I have the honour to lead and which brings the message of His Excellency Mamadou Tandja, President of the Republic — is more than pleased to see you, Mr. President, presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. Your election, which the Niger welcomes with pride, is without a doubt both recognition and endorsement of your exceptional abilities as a seasoned diplomat, which you have demonstrated throughout your distinguished career. We in the Niger are well placed to attest to your commitment to the cause of Africa and of our common subregion, specifically through the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, that other forum in which our countries work together for the same goals that are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Thus we consider ourselves to be in your good hands, ready to advance the work of the Organization in this time of formidable challenges.

I should like to renew our congratulations to the outgoing President, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, on his active and very full presidency, and to state that the Niger was honoured to serve alongside him in its capacity as Vice-President at the sixty-third session.

On behalf of the Niger, I should like to reiterate our profound gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his unflagging efforts to make the United Nations a more just and effective Organization, able to meet the expectations of its Members.

My delegation welcomes your decision, Sir, to declare as the very apt theme for the Assembly's current session the strengthening of multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development. In our view, this theme has the potential to spur Member States to greater initiative in realizing the goals that we are pursuing, namely, those of preserving international peace and security. We are pleased, in this regard, by the renewed dynamism in cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations, in particular the African Union. We believe that this direction has the potential

to lead to lasting solutions to the problems of peace and security in Africa.

We are convinced that such cooperation will yield results even on the most delicate issues, such as the implementation of the political-legal concept of the principle of universal jurisdiction. While my delegation welcomes the inclusion of this topic in the agenda of the General Assembly, we should like once again to endorse the concerns already expressed by the African Union and to urge Member States to avoid using this principle inappropriately. We hope that our debate in this common forum will make possible a better understanding of this concept and a better definition of the framework governing its eventual application.

We note the progress that is being made in various areas in the prevention and management of conflicts, both in Africa and elsewhere. And we welcome the commitment and goodwill of all parties carrying out concerted actions to ensure international peace and security.

The recommendations of the special summit on conflict prevention and management held in Tripoli reflect the will of African leaders to take on issues that have always slowed our continent in its march towards progress and prosperity. It is at this level that the theme of multilateralism — which you, Mr. President, have selected for the sixty-fourth session — takes on all its meaning. Indeed, the United Nations, as the common framework enjoying the highest level of participation by countries and other actors in the world, should serve as a laboratory in which we work towards the goal of a more balanced international community.

Governed as it is by the laws of globalization, the current international scene is, as we know, much more complex today than in the past. We must address and manage the consequences of the international financial crisis and, for countries in the Sahel such as the Niger, the recurrent effects of food insecurity. We must address climate change in a concerted and coordinated manner, and we must constantly question the current formulas for preventing conflict and maintaining international peace and security.

My delegation supports such initiatives, which must be inclusive, because they must benefit from the contributions and perspectives of everyone, including the most vulnerable countries. In particular, we support the various discussions under way on this subject, whether in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or the Security Council, or even in the context of specific initiatives such as the discussions being held by Canada on peacekeeping operations.

We in the Niger have made undeniable progress in the area of combating poverty and promoting basic development, thanks to the bold actions of the President. Through projects designed specifically to meet the needs of Niger's people, he has enabled our country to finally give meaning to development. Today, development is palpable in every corner of the Niger because of proactive and systematic efforts to build classrooms and health clinics, dig wells, build local drinking water systems and promote a microcredit system designed specifically for the most vulnerable rural women. The head of State is doing this to improve the living conditions of our people, who suffered from the political instability that characterized our country during the 1990s, which one could describe as a lost decade for Niger's development. In late August, a meeting was held in Niamey for the second 2009 review by the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility of the International Monetary Fund. The Niger's performance in those areas was acknowledged and commended at the meeting, which brought together representatives of the World Bank and of our country's Ministry of Economy and Finance.

I recall these aspects of the situation in Niger because, as members are aware, a referendum was held in our country on 4 August 2009 to adopt a new constitution. It formalizes the return to a presidential Administration more suited to the realities of our country and introduces new provisions such as that establishing two chambers, Parliament and the Senate. The referendum, held in an atmosphere of calm and transparency by the National Independent Electoral Commission, enabled us to adopt the new constitution, which formalizes the arrival of the sixth Republic.

Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to reassure the international community, development partners, civil society and other actors and entities that may be justifiably concerned about the political situation in the Niger that the country is not in a situation of lawlessness or insurrection, as some would have one believe, but rather is a place where all people freely express their opinions within the framework of the democratic process, to which we are deeply committed.

The sovereign people of the Niger have chosen to refashion the Republic around certain values with which they identify. In this new endeavour, President Mamadou Tandja has solemnly pledged that no group or structure will be overlooked. Following the referendum, the President recalled his willingness to work with all citizens of the Niger in the interest of the country and its people. The forthcoming legislative elections, to be held on 20 October, and the municipal elections in December 2009 will be opportunities for large-scale mobilization to ensure better representation for the people in the conduct of State affairs. It is this reality of a Niger marching towards development, resolutely committed to building its future and more determined than ever to lift its people out of poverty, that we must bear in mind.

We fully support any joint action that can contribute to general and complete disarmament. We have been at the forefront in fulfilling our commitments in this area, and we are resolved to continue to work in that regard within our modest means. Our most recent initiative was to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 14 May 2009 — a formality that made the Niger one of the very first countries to do so and accelerated its entry into force. We believe that this gesture, although it may seem minor, assumes its full meaning in the context of the difficult path towards complete disarmament. For us, this initiative, together with our country's ratification of the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, adopted by the Economic Community of West African States, is a significant contribution to disarmament at our level.

We are following the various processes carried out at various levels to reform the United Nations system. This includes reform of the Security Council, with regard to which we call for greater recognition of Africa's role through the Ezulwini Consensus; the ongoing preparations to ensure the success of the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen; and the summit convened by the Secretary-General and just concluded here in New York, which benefited from the valuable guidance of heads of State and Government. In addition, there is United Nations system-wide coherence; the definition of the new concept of the responsibility to protect, which needs to be clearly defined and set out, as in the Constitutive Act of the African Union; and, finally, the follow-up to the outcome document of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, which the previous President of the General Assembly wished to begin by appointing facilitators.

With regard to all those issues and many other important concerns, such as those referred to in the outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held at Doha at the end of 2008, we wish to express once again our ongoing concern that we should develop an inclusive and transparent approach at all levels that takes into account the concerns of both large and small countries.

We are following with great interest, and often concern, the progress of the commitments made within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, and we note that it remains mixed. At the same time, adverse phenomena are placing constraints on both developed and developing countries, such as the world economic and financial crisis. These problems now require that all of us redouble our efforts to keep our commitments. In that regard, we will closely follow the preparations for the 2010 mid-term review conference, which, we hope, will result in efforts to accelerate the attainment of the agreed objectives. We also take this opportunity to reaffirm the irreplaceable nature of the New Partnership for Africa's Development as a relevant African initiative that must enjoy the support of the United Nations and of the international community as a whole.

We welcome the decision to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and we salute the host country, Turkey, for its generous initiative vis-à-vis our group of countries. We also thank other countries and partner organizations which have always remained sensitive to the many constraints and concerns of our countries. We also know that, if significant progress has been made in 10 years in recognizing our difficult conditions and establishing useful partnerships in that regard, it is thanks to the coordination of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We thank him for his initiatives, which remain essential for least developed and landlocked countries in the Sahel, such as the Niger.

I should also like to express my Government's appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for his decision to devote part of this session to the subject of the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. We believe that that issue is worthy of much attention and of action throughout the sixty-fourth session. Indeed, we must maintain the momentum begun by eminent Member States through the Third Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace, held in 2008; the High-Level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace; and the international conference on dialogue among civilizations and cultural diversity, held from 2 to 4 June 2009 in Kairouan, Tunisia. We must develop these initiatives, for which my delegation reiterates its congratulations to the Governments of the countries concerned.

Along the same lines, my delegation applauds the Government of the Philippines, which has decided to organize a special meeting at the ministerial level for the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, under the theme "Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace and Development", from 1 to 3 December 2009 in Manila. That shows that the theme continues to draw the interest of many States and that you, Mr. President, were aptly inspired in identifying it as a topic of interest for the international community.

I would like to conclude my statement by renewing my delegation's delight at the direction that you, Sir, have suggested for the current Assembly session and by reiterating our full confidence in your leadership, which promises a very fruitful and dynamic term in the pursuit of common objectives of the international community. As always, you can count on the unflagging support and readiness of the Government of the Niger throughout your term.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani, Adviser to the President of the Republic of the Sudan.

Mr. Atabani (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure at the outset to convey the best wishes of the Government and people of the Sudan for successful deliberations in the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly on its entire agenda. The agenda contains topics reflecting the challenges faced by the international community and the priorities we have to set, such as the development and welfare of our peoples, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the mitigation of economic and financial crises, containing the effects of climate change and maintaining international peace and security.

I am also pleased to extend warm congratulations to Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this important session. We are confident, Sir, that your political skills and diplomatic expertise will help realize our ambitions to have an able, effective and transparent United Nations. We also wish to commend the dexterity and high competence with which your predecessor, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, conducted the proceedings of the previous session. We also wish to commend the Secretary-General for the efforts undertaken by the Secretariat to fulfil the role and responsibilities of the United Nations.

Millions throughout the world look forward to our deliberations in the wake of the suffocating crises through which the international community is passing. Traces of the crises are still lingering in the family of nations, especially in the developing countries, while the fruits of scientific and technological progress nourish the hope of better opportunities for a just and equitable world order.

While non-compliance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and its established rules, along with double standards, has made the world less safe, the economic and financial crises have exacerbated the challenges. The world is experiencing the worst and gravest economic and financial crisis since the Depression of the 1930s. The crisis is compounded by such numerous and intertwined problems as the food crisis and climate change along with their destructive effects on the developing countries and threats to their national priorities and to the gains they have made towards the achievement of the MDGs.

In its chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China, the Sudan has accorded special attention to the repercussions of this crisis on the developing countries. In those countries the crisis has given rise to poverty, hunger, unemployment and slackening of growth, if not economic downturn, and has adversely affected balances of trade and of payment. At the same time, the crisis has led to falls in commodity prices, sharp fluctuations in exchange rates, sudden diversions of

capital flows and of foreign direct investment, falls in remittances and drops in tourism revenues. Concomitantly, the social sector has suffered greatly because of the erosion of social security networks that provide health, education and other services. That in turn has augmented infant and maternal mortality rates.

The Group of 77 and China is deeply concerned over this crisis and its impact on countries facing special challenges, foremost among which are African States, the least developed countries, small island States and countries emerging from conflict. The realities impose a moral duty on us — especially the industrial countries — to channel our collective response into a strong commitment to providing the required solutions. Those include direct funding, capacity-building, promoting sustainable development, addressing debt problems, eliminating obstacles to trade and investment and States meeting their international development pledges.

Comprehensive reform of the international financial and economic system and ensuring an enhanced role for the developing countries in decision-making processes in international financial institutions are of central significance. Major industrial countries cannot ignore the universal legitimacy of the collective voice of the world's States here at the United Nations. In this connection, the open-ended working group of the General Assembly to follow up on the issues contained in the Outcome of the Conference on the World Economic and Financial Crisis and Its Impact on Development (resolution 63/303, annex), held in New York in June 2009, must discharge its work and mandate expeditiously.

By the same token, we hope that endeavours to deal with climate change in the course of the conference to be held in Copenhagen in December of this year will be crowned with success. The developing countries — which were by no means responsible for climate change and global warming — urge industrialized countries, on the basis of their historic responsibility, to address the root causes of climate change by providing new and additional predictable financial resources, to help build capacities, to transfer, entrench and develop technology and to fulfil relevant obligations and pledges with a view to attaining sustainable economic growth that satisfies the legitimate priorities and needs of the developing countries. As Chair of the Group of 77 and China, my country will spare no effort in furthering those demands.

The absence of democracy in international relations, as exemplified by the present form and composition of the Security Council, has become a major factor in diminishing the ability of the United Nations to respond to the structural and substantive challenges and changes in the international community. That has been exacerbated by unilateral sanctions that hinder international trade and investment and violate the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law.

The United Nations rostrum is being used by some to serve narrow interests such that the concept of human rights has become a tool for ceaseless politicization and score settling. In the same vein, the often misused concept of terrorism has led to the victim being equated with the aggressor, as is currently evident in the plight of the Palestinian people, who are still chafing under the yoke of occupation. As a result, the Palestinian question has remained unsolved, which has gravely compromised the reputation and credibility of the United Nations.

It is thus clear that for the United Nations to effectively serve a changing world, it has to effect an all-out change in its working methods and approaches so that it will truly express the voice of all nations. Consequently, my country, like all other developing nations, supports the call to reactivate the role of the General Assembly and to reform the Security Council, based on the well-known African position on this matter.

This session is of special importance to my country for it comes at a time when we are putting an end to what has been called the longest civil war in Africa by concluding the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The Agreement adopts a system making citizenship a basis for rights and duties, and espousing diversity as a source of unity and brotherhood built on the rule of law, good governance, respect for freedoms and human rights, as well as fair and democratic power-sharing.

Additionally, the Agreement establishes the principles of wealth sharing, in line with the norms of equity and equality. The implementation of the Agreement has proceeded with the completion of the formation of relevant mechanisms and institutions, along with the full commitment by the two parties to

the Agreement to the sound treatment of the question of entitlements as reflected in the handling of the question of Abyei.

We note here the fact that donors have not fulfilled the development resources and pledges they took upon themselves in support of the Agreement has adversely affected its implementation, particularly in the spheres of development, rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants in society. We therefore urge the fulfilment of all pledges so as to foster peace and stability, as well as the reconstruction of the country after the ravages of years of war, so that peace can be meaningful.

After conducting a population census — the accuracy and credibility of which were testified to by numerous international and regional institutions, including the United Nations — and in conformity with the Agreement, we are about to hold general legislative and executive elections. We assert our resolve and determination to hold them in April 2010, while we continue to strengthen efforts aimed at political reform, which is indispensable for founding a durable peace. We invite the international community, including the United Nations, to support the holding of elections in word and deed.

Despite all the positive developments in the peace process, we note with profound concern the recent armed tribal conflicts in southern Sudan. Those conflicts threaten not only the stability of the Sudan and the South but also the stability of the whole region. We would like to recall here that, in accordance with the Agreement, the responsibility for the maintenance of peace in the South lies with the Government of Southern Sudan. Therefore, it is everybody's duty to urge and encourage the Government of Southern Sudan to discharge its duty for the sake of its citizens' security and prosperity.

Our people have recognized that peace will not be complete unless it extends to our people in Darfur. The signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement in Abuja under the gracious aegis of the African Union affirmed the Government's serious commitment to resolving the problem of Darfur peacefully.

While we were earnestly attempting to implement that Agreement, certain international parties did not fulfil their pledges and obligations in strict application of the Agreement, such as by applying unwarranted pressure on the wrong side. Instead of pressuring the parties that shied away from the peace option, pressure was put on the Abuja signatories themselves. That hampered peace endeavours and led to the protraction of the conflict.

Yet, thanks to the steadfast maintenance of the Agreement by our Government and people and our relentless efforts to achieve peace, we are now seeing positive and far-reaching developments leading towards lasting peace in Darfur, thanks also to the complete commitment shown by the National Unity Government and its close cooperation with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur through the Tripartite Mechanism.

That policy has led to far-reaching improvements in the humanitarian situation in Darfur, as recognized and attested to by United Nations reports. That is further supported by our scrupulous commitment to the humanitarian agreement signed last April with the United States Special Envoy to the Sudan. We reiterate our commitment to close cooperation with the United Nations and with national and international organizations with a view to enhancing and developing that policy in a manner that prevents any humanitarian disaster or even food gaps in the future.

In this connection, it is imperative to note the massive return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their villages, which makes it incumbent on the Government, the Sudanese people and the international community to seize this opportunity to foster this trend, as it is the real test of peace.

We renew our commitment and preparedness to work expeditiously and at all times to ensure the success of the forthcoming negotiations in Doha within the framework of the Afro-Arab initiative and the efforts of the Joint Mediator, in accordance with the decision taken by the initiatives committee in its meeting held at the margins of this session.

We welcome the declaration made by the American President, Barack Obama, before the General Assembly, on his country's readiness to help find solutions to the problems of Darfur. Noting the positive tone in the statements voiced by the American President towards developing countries in general, we hope that his words will be translated into action and sincere effort in order to correct the misguided policies and positions of the previous American Administration, which have compromised bilateral relations and aggravated the region's problems. This, undoubtedly,

requires, first and foremost, lifting the unilateral sanctions and removing the name of the Sudan from the United States' list of terrorist States.

We renew our appeal to the armed groups to muster the will for a solution and for involvement in the peace process, so that the interests of the Sudanese people are put first and foremost. The people of the Sudan are more than capable of solving their own problems. My country has repeatedly declared its commitment to a unilateral ceasefire as an initiative for confidence-building and bringing about successful negotiations, and we hope that armed factions will respond positively so that a permanently monitored ceasefire can be reached.

The international community, which has, in the past, promised to take stringent measures against those who refused to take part in the peace talks or impede them, has to do so in deed and not just in word. The question of development, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction should be given special attention, as called for in Security Council resolution 1769 (2007). There should be a transition from providing emergency humanitarian assistance to supporting development, in order to facilitate the return and settlement of IDPs and refugees.

From this rostrum, I wish to assert my country's keen interest in having constructive relations with all its neighbours and its full readiness for complete cooperation with them, with a view to extinguishing all regional hot beds of tension. In this regard, I would like to stress our preparedness and willingness to normalize relations with Chad, in conformity with all agreements and instruments signed with them and we hope they will demonstrate the same determination and readiness.

At a time when the Government of National Unity had made remarkable progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and when the Sudan had started a new phase towards the achievement of political reform and transformation, peaceful devolution of authority, progress towards ending disputes and infighting and towards the achievement of inclusive development for our people, the President of the Republic himself, who is the chief guarantor of the Sudan's sovereignty, was targeted by so-called international justice in a futile attempt to undermine stability and development. The Sudanese rejected this, as did the international community, including regional and international organizations.

We emphasize that the realization of security and stability in Darfur requires speedy correction of those developments and a renewed commitment to the peace process and the avoidance of all that may have a negative impact on peace in the Sudan and the African continent.

Between the signing of the United Nations Charter in the middle of the last century and the momentous developments and profound challenges currently experienced by the world, much water has flown under the bridge of international relations, which makes annual General Assembly sessions serious opportunities for introspection and for gleaning lessons.

Let us renew our resolve to foster multilateral action, for which this Organization stands. Let our sixty-fourth session be a defining point towards achieving our collective aspirations for a world where the values of fraternity and common destiny prevail.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on Mr. Alexis Thambwe Mwamba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Thambwe Mwamba (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Republic, is unable to attend but has instructed me to convey to you his most heartfelt congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. The head of State has no doubt that your vast experience in the Organization, broadened by your talents and your knowledge, will help you to overcome the myriad of challenges that come with your new office. He expresses his wish also for every success in your work at this regular session.

Let me, as I begin my statement, commend your predecessor, Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, and express to him our gratitude for his excellent service as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, which has just been completed, and this to the satisfaction of all Member States.

Lastly, I pay well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his commitment to the quest for peace and security worldwide, in general, and for his very commendable involvement in restoring

lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my country, in particular.

At this time when the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly is beginning, it is worth dwelling on the situation currently prevailing in certain regions of the planet. In the Middle East, the situation continues to be tenuous and to be the focus of attention of the global public. The Democratic Republic of the Congo recognizes the right of the people of Israel to live in peace in a State with internationally recognized borders, just as it would like to reiterate that the settlement of this conflict specifically entails recognition of the fact that the Palestinian question is at the heart of the very problem in the Middle East.

The situations in Afghanistan and in Iraq continue to be of concern. The Democratic Republic of the Congo urges the international community to eradicate the scourge of terrorism, so that those two countries can fully return to their place on the international scene.

In Africa, and speaking just about our own geographic area in the central and southern portion of the continent, we would like to refer to the healthy progress made in the implementation of the agreements reached in 2006 between the Government of Burundi and the Forces Nationales de Libération; the smooth evolution of the inclusive political dialogue in the Central African Republic; the needed promotion of good-neighbourly relations between Chad and the Sudan; the admittedly slow but sure and determined promotion of democracy; and the consolidation of peace and stability in Southern Africa.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the South African facilitation, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the international community, as well as other bilateral and multilateral partners, for the efforts that they have continued to make to achieve the considerable progress that we hail today.

With respect to the Republic of Madagascar, I would particularly like to express my full satisfaction with the mediation by the eminent SADC representative with respect to the political dialogue. Here, I would like to reiterate the SADC position, which rejects and condemns any unilateral decision that would violate the spirit of the Maputo agreements.

No social or economic order remains safe, if it fails to bring beneficial effects to the greatest number of people. The crisis of the global financial system continues to undermine global economies worldwide, be they developed or developing. For my country, in particular, this crisis has led to a significant drop in export commodity prices, declining currency reserves, the growing cost of imports, with a depreciation of the national currency, declining growth rates and a decline in budget and tax revenues.

The consequences of this turn of events are considerable. This crisis has led to a shortfall in resources to finance infrastructure. It has led to broad job loss, worsening of social conflict, and, particularly at a time when we are coming out of a complex conflict, a shrinking budget to finance the necessary restoration of State authority throughout the national territory in order to complete the establishment of peace. It is urgently necessary therefore to review the international financial system.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is aware that we will need colossal resources to ensure sustainable development in a world context that has seen surging food and energy prices and a global financial crisis. These phenomena are compounded by the effects of climate change. That is why I welcome the holding by the Secretary-General on 22 September 2009 of the high-level event on this issue. If we do not make decisions on the fate of present and future generations with respect to global warming and climate change and if we are not able to prevent rising sea levels, desertification or the extinction of species and the loss of biodiversity, inter alia, our world will inevitably move towards the risk of a disaster for which the African continent will be the first to bear the costs.

The issue of adopting a post-Kyoto agreement that would require polluter countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and financially compensate those who have forests needs to be seriously considered.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo accounts for more than half of the forests in the Congo basin, which is the second largest in the world after the Amazon region. This area has an enormous asset that it will defend at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled for December 2009 in Copenhagen.

With respect to reform of the United Nations system, the Democratic Republic of the Congo agrees with the view that the current United Nations system is no longer, in its current design, in keeping with the expectations of those who promote it or even with the letter of Charter, which is its inspiration. That is why we would like to reiterate our plea for the full representation of Africa in the decision-making bodies, and more specifically in the Security Council.

Regardless of the outcome of the current negotiations on this matter, my delegation continues to be of the view that any viable reform of the Security Council must take into account the political and numerical weight of Africa in the General Assembly, especially since two thirds of the situations before the Security Council involve Africa.

With respect to the responsibility to protect, we believe that it is up to each State to protect its people from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or ethnic cleansing. We are also of the view that the principal role of the international community in these areas should be to determine how to build institutional capacities and provide substantial assistance to States, more specifically to the Administrations of countries in post-conflict situations, so that they can acquire the means to ensure that they have the resources to provide this protection.

I have very succinctly addressed the major challenges that today's world faces and for which we need to build a common response. I have talked about reform of the United Nations and about the responsibility to protect. I have not addressed the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the troubled region of the African Great Lakes. Three years after the success of the electoral operations in 2006, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now, at long last, facing the trying process of normalizing democratic life. We understand that restoring the rule of law is an urgent priority.

In that context, peace and stability can only persist if the citizens realize that politically sensitive issues can be resolved by legitimate and fair means. The rule of law cannot go hand in hand with corruption. It is no exaggeration to assert that the efforts initiated recently by the President of the Republic and the Government to fight corruption and to put an end to the rule of impunity have begun to bear fruit. However, we accept that much remains to be done in terms of capacity-building to ensure proper administration of justice.

The Congolese experience of the 2006 democratic elections was built on a difficult legacy of the dark years of foreign occupation followed by an internal rift, the consequences of which are still seen today in the ongoing use of rape as a weapon of war. To address that situation, at the request of the Congolese authorities, the first investigation of the International Criminal Court began by considering the serious crimes that had been committed on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1 July 2002. The rest is well known: the first three cases before the International Criminal Court are based on that submission and the national courts have also been called upon to work on those issues.

The Congolese courts currently involved are certainly already playing an important role in restoring the rule of law, but a successful transition from war to peace, from a divided past to a shared future, cannot be envisaged for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo without a mechanism that can bring a sense of justice to all citizens, establish or renew civic trust, restore the duty of memory and reconcile the people and the communities.

The sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of the Congo is, in our view, the most shameful and gravest crime witnessed by humankind in the twenty-first century. Statistically, 80 per cent of the crimes committed in the entire country took place mainly in the two provinces in the East of the country most affected by the effects of war, namely South and North Kivu. In fact, 60 per cent of the rapes were committed in North Kivu and 20 per cent in South Kivu. Justice must be done to the women and girls who have been raped.

I can already attest to the strong resolve of His Excellency President Joseph Kabila Kabange to put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of those heinous crimes, whether civilian or military. Despite the apocalyptic picture, the situation that persists in the East of my country continues to improve.

In conformity with the relevant provisions of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working with Rwanda and Uganda respectively, launched joint military operations last year and early

this year with a view to disarming and, where necessary, forcing the rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army, on the one hand, and those of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), on the other, to return to their respective countries. As part of the same military operations, called Kimia II, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) are carrying out an offensive against the elements of the FDLR that have remained in the mountains of South Kivu, in order to bring peace to that region.

The results, I repeat, are positive. By way of illustration, the authority of the State has been restored; the FDLR command posts in North and South Kivu have been destroyed; more and more FDLR troops are surrendering to the FARDC and to the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC); several FDLR elements have returned to their country of origin; all the communication and supply lines in North and South Kivu are now open; the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the protection of Virunga National Park have been strengthened; and the incidents of rape and all other forms of sexual violence against women have seen an appreciable decline.

Peace is gradually being established to the great benefit of the Congolese people. Moreover, fruitful talks aimed at benefiting our bilateral and multilateral relations with Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda are under way, and the future looks better.

The return to normalcy in our subregion is enabling us to make efforts towards the urgent peacebuilding and economic recovery of the country. As the President of the Republic continues to underscore, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has resolutely undertaken to strengthen and promote the ideals of national reconciliation, peace, democracy and good governance within its borders, and is unquestionably committed to a policy of openness without exclusion based on dialogue and cooperation of all kinds with all countries that favour peace and dialogue. Our wish today is to see the international community step up its efforts and continue to support the process of bringing about peace and unity.

On the elections, my country is preparing to hold city, municipal and local elections, which represents a great meeting of the people with its history. The steps to update the national register of the Independent Electoral Commission started in the first half of 2009.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is already involved in the reform of its institutions. It is important to conclude those various reforms, in particular in the area of the administration of justice. The Congolese justice system will be more effective and efficient if it has the international community's support, especially in terms of capacity-building.

Reform of the security system is also under way. The reform of the army and police services has had the consistent support of bilateral partners and of the United Nations through MONUC, its Mission in the Congo. My country is firmly committed to working to successfully conclude that reform aimed at ensuring not only its peace, unity, territorial integrity, national sovereignty and stability but also those of the entire subregion by preventing the reoccurrence of the security problems and tensions seen there.

In addition, the Government is doing its utmost, through duly identified ways to increase prosperity, to implement programmes in order to meet the basic needs of the people, in particular on health, education, food self-sufficiency, basic infrastructure, electricity and drinking water for all, not to mention, of course, the fight against malaria and HIV/AIDS as well as poverty alleviation.

Like other post-conflict countries, the Democratic Republic of the Congo underscores the urgent need to organize and hold an international conference on the financing of its reconstruction as soon as possible. For us, it is a question of building a new Congo, a nation opening up to the world at the centre of a continent full of change, a country where every foreigner, indiscriminately, can be free, assured of the protection of his investments, to work for his better future. All that foreigners do to contribute to our development will be duly acknowledged and appreciated.

Emerging from a long war with many outside implications, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my country, is fully aware of the importance of regional cooperation. The most fervent wish of the Congolese people is to restore relations of trust and cooperation with all its neighbours, without exception. The Government intends to pursue a policy of dialogue, openness, friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourliness, because the country has always strived to work to bring about a more united Africa that

stands together, distinct in its greater understanding, tolerance, peace and solidarity.

By way of conclusion, allow me to reiterate that so much war and fratricidal violence has taught us that the most expensive peace is still less onerous than the cheapest war. In this regard, I appeal for international solidarity during this stage of building our hard-won peace, for a peaceful and stable Democratic Republic of the Congo is an asset to our planet's common destiny.

I would be remiss if I did not conclude my statement without thanking once again all those whose commitment, courage and determination have helped and continue to help my country embrace the concepts of negotiation and peaceful settlement of crisis by casting aside war and the use of force.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset, Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, to congratulate you and your fraternal country, the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. We are confident that your experience and knowledge of the role and influence of the United Nations in international relations will play a great part in the success of the work of this session. I also take this opportunity to express our thanks to your predecessor, His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of friendly Nicaragua, for his excellent efforts in guiding the work of the previous session. I wish also to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization's machinery. We wish him every success.

There is no doubt that the United Nations has achieved much during its more than 60 years of joint international action. Its achievements have made a positive contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security. The Organization has provided technical assistance to developing countries in their socio-economic development projects, and has helped to reach consensus on many political issues and conflicts, contributing to the development of international peacekeeping mechanisms.

And yet the Palestinian issue remains unresolved despite all the efforts of Arab countries and the international community. We believe that the Arab Peace Initiative and international peace efforts are the most appropriate way to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of an end to occupation, the return of Arab lands occupied since 1967, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital and the removal of all the illegal and illegitimate Israeli settlements. This would indeed help to achieve peaceful coexistence and positive cooperation between Arab States and Israel, and would contribute greatly to opening new horizons of cooperation, progress and development in the region and the world at large. Peace based on those principles would be one of the most important achievements of the people of the region and would pave the way towards ending regional crises and eradicating the root causes of terrorism.

We thus call on Israel to seize the historic Initiative and join the efforts to establish a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, one that would bring security and peaceful coexistence to all the States and peoples of the region. Squandering this historic opportunity would constitute a grave loss for the Israeli people, and we would all regret it.

We welcome the recent positive developments in Iraq. We hope that such developments will continue in order to achieve security and stability in that country, contribute to the success of the comprehensive national reconciliation efforts and help establish positive, cooperative relations with neighbouring countries, allowing Iraq to resume its distinct positive role in the region at all levels.

We look forward to positive results from the Darfur peace talks, to be held in Doha, Qatar, between the Sudanese Government and the Darfur opposition. We hope that the parties concerned can build a framework for a political agreement that would help realize security, stability and development in Darfur. We also welcome the policies of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, President of the Transitional Federal Government of brotherly Somalia, and his efforts to achieve peace in his country. We urge all of our brethren and all factions in Somalia to renounce violence and embrace dialogue. We support international efforts to combat piracy and armed robbery against commercial ships off the coast of the Horn of Africa.

We welcome the continued cooperation between the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran, the international community and the International Atomic Energy Agency. In this respect, we see some positive signs that could lead to a sound diplomatic solution.

There is no doubt that the efforts exerted by the rich industrialized nations to restore stability and balance to the international capital markets have begun to bear fruit. This could lead to the recovery of the world economy. We believe more international effort is needed to reach consensus in the Doha Round of trade negotiations, taking into account the interests of all States, including the developing countries. In light of the serious shortages of food, water and medicine from which many countries are suffering, we urge the rich industrialized countries to increase investment in agriculture research, food security and the supply of water and medicine, for these have a direct impact on humankind.

It is also our hope that the Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen at the end of the year will adopt a long-term plan to protect the environment and reduce harmful carbon dioxide emissions.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In conclusion, I would like to express our deep thanks and gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for his efforts in leading the work of this session. We urge all Member States to take the necessary practical measures to help us reach consensus on all the issues on our agenda.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Mr. Elrington (Belize): Please permit me to congratulate Mr. Ali Abdussalam Treki, on behalf of the Prime Minister, Government and people of Belize, on having assumed the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session and to wish him every success in his stewardship. Permit me also to extend my Government's thanks to Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for his excellent stewardship of the work of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

Belize is pleased to discharge its obligation by participating in the general debate of the sixty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly on the theme "Effective responses to global crises: strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development".

Just over one week ago, we celebrated the twenty-eighth anniversary of our independence. Joining us in the celebrations were members of the diplomatic core drawn from the four corners of the globe. And even as we made merry, our collective minds were silently cogitating upon the crises that are threatening to destroy our collective way of life and, indeed, the very planet which sustains us.

All indications are that the aftershocks of the global economic crisis have now begun to affect Belize's real economy. We are experiencing declining levels of revenue, a worrying reduction in productivity, diminishing remittances, crushing debt-servicing obligations, unrelenting budgetary pressures and a drying up of resources on which to draw.

These challenges are aggravated by other ills that plague our day-to-day existence. Annually, we are threatened by hurricanes and floods of ever greater intensity, which reduce the yields of our farmers, erode our beaches and wash away vital infrastructure. Warmer seas damage our great barrier reef and impair its capacity to incubate and nurture the fish and other marine organisms that depend upon a healthy reef system for their survival. Illicit traffickers in drugs and arms penetrate our borders at will, leaving drug addicts, broken families, violence, death and destruction in their wake. Our population is also being ravaged by HIV/AIDS. Other non-communicable chronic diseases are approaching pandemic proportions. All these crises have placed the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in Belize in real jeopardy.

The globalization that was the tide to lift all boats has not been so even. Its networks of interdependence have compounded how we as national Governments can secure the basic needs of our people. Its evolving system of global governance is unresponsive to the cares and concerns of middle-income countries like ours, for despite the devastating impact it is having upon our economies, we are yet to be invited to the table to participate in the discussion on the global economic crisis. Our pleas for an ambitious climate agreement are yet to be honoured with serious contemplation in the current negotiations, although the

viability of our countries hangs in the balance, and the global commitment of a development-oriented trade round seems to have been perfunctorily relegated to the annals of trade-negotiating history. Our demands, although ceremoniously acknowledged in countless resolutions and declarations, remain unceremoniously unmet.

If we are to define an effective global response to the converging global challenges that confront us, we must first examine how we are governed. While we, as Member States of the United Nations, have endorsed the principle of sovereign equality, it is apparent from the structural relationships engendered in our institutions that the principle is honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The United Nations has its Security Council and the Permanent Five; the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have their weighted voting and the World Trade Organization has its green room. In the larger global arena, we have a proliferation of convenient groupings — the Group of Six, the Group of Seven, the Group of Eight, the Group of Twenty and the Major Economies Forum, to name but a few. The club model of cooperation is deeply entrenched in our multilateral system.

While we cannot deny that this model has facilitated some decisions and agreements, we also cannot ignore the costs associated with that facilitation. This model of global governance has progressively accumulated a debt of trust and confidence among the wider international community not only as a result of its manner of exclusive decision-making, but also because of the lack of implementation of global decisions and agreements. The club model of multilateral cooperation suffers from a crisis of legitimacy.

If we accept that we operate as sovereign equals, we cannot continue to acquiesce to governance by a few. We must accept nothing less than equal representation. In that regard, we recognize and applaud our brothers from the South who have, through their economic prowess and political deftness, taken the mantle of leadership in some international issues. We are all entitled to be heard and, what is more, we are all entitled to have the decisions that are made reflect our concerns if not our demands.

We need a new model for multilateral cooperation framework in which all nations have meaningful input into the decision-making process on issues that have a direct impact on their interests. This requires fundamental structural reform and not mere cursory efforts for technocratic coherence. Given the far-reaching geopolitical consequences that the global economic crisis has touched off, we now have the perfect opportunity to redress the shortcomings of the exclusive club model, thereby restoring trust and confidence in our multilateral institutions. The time for inclusive multilateralism is now upon us.

Allow me to now address some of the issues that bear upon the immediate interests of my people and my country, Belize. Belize falls within the World Bank category of middle-income countries. Middle-income countries play a pivotal role in the global economy and in global politics. We account for some two thirds of the world's population. Our economies provide important and growing sources of export demand and investment opportunities. Some economies of middle-income countries are now even big enough to create systemic risks in global financial markets. On strategic issues, middle-income countries have not infrequently emerged as key players, and one half of the world's protected areas are to be found in our countries.

Still, poverty remains prevalent in our countries. Some three quarters of the world's poor live in middle-income countries. We also account for an estimated 47 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions.

Given the aforementioned, it is evident that whatever happens in middle-income countries affects the entire world for better or for worse. For this reason, if for no other, it is in the interest of the world community that middle-income countries remain viable, vibrant and dynamic.

In order for that to happen, however, bilateral and multilateral institutions must redefine the terms of engagement with our countries. Rather than focusing on per capita income, a needs-based analysis is necessary. Financing arrangements that tend towards the short and medium term must also be revisited. In order to build capacity, improve our institutions and spur economic growth, we need direct fiscal and budgetary support. Moreover, in view of the high ratio of debt-to-gross-domestic-product (GDP) in many of our countries, which has been further exacerbated by the recent global economic crisis, the need for concessionary financing and debt relief is ever more critical.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the integration of markets spurred significant growth in high-income nations, while low-income nations exploited their comparative advantage in cheap labour. However, middle-income countries had neither advantage in knowledge nor low-wage products and consequently, in real terms, experienced economic stagnation. Many of us were forced to embark upon a process of diversification to ensure our continued growth and development.

Therefore, in the early 1990s, Belize made rapid strides in building up its international financial services industry. We did so in accordance with the best practices of the industry internationally, and we were guided every step of the way by the recommendations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). As a country whose GDP is just over $1 billion, the contribution of this industry to our economy is significant. A large percentage of the deposits from the international banking sector has been used to finance development projects, support our citrus industry and commercial free zone and export processing zone businesses, which account for some $1 billion worth of investments in our country.

Furthermore, since this sector finances only foreign exchange earning businesses, it enables the generation of millions of dollars in foreign exchange that directly supports our fixed exchange rate system. It is also a source for the creation of relatively high-quality jobs for many Belizeans. On the whole, in 2008 the international financial services industry accounted for some 9 per cent of Belize's GDP and 10 per cent of its gross imports.

Considering the vital role that this industry plays in the Belizean economy, ensuring its integrity is in our best interests. We have developed a regulatory framework and enacted legislation for its reinforcement. We have also made commitments to the OECD to improve transparency and establish an effective exchange of information. But now, in the midst of an economic crisis that had its origin in the financial markets of the developed world, the Group of 20 (G-20) finds it convenient to reactivate its harmful tax initiative at the expense — and to the disadvantage — of an industry we have so painstakingly and carefully groomed into a productive sector of our economy.

Beyond the calls for reform, we have heard some G-20 members call for a complete annihilation of the industry. If that were to occur, I shudder to think of the suffering and hardship it would occasion for our country and people. We are convinced that a more equitable and effective way to address the issue of offshore financial services is through a mechanism for multilateral cooperation in which all States participate on an equal footing.

Climate change poses perhaps the most serious threat to our sustainable development and viability. I need not remind the Assembly of the emerging scientific evidence, which prognosticates more rapid climate change and sea-level rise. Let me take this opportunity to applaud the Secretary-General for making climate change a priority and for convening last week's Summit. The urgency of a global response to this issue is inescapable. We welcome the various national and regional efforts to construct mechanisms to address climate change and its impact. In our region, Belize hosts the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, which has benefited from the support of the international community and has been recognized as a centre of excellence.

However, we know all too well from the impacts we are observing today that piecemeal action is not sufficient. In fact, notwithstanding national and regional action, global greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase. We can only begin to respond effectively to this problem by agreeing to implement ambitious mitigation targets and increasing our support for adaptation. Considering that small island developing States and other particularly vulnerable coastal countries are already experiencing dangerous climate change, avoiding adverse effects on these especially vulnerable countries should be the benchmark for determining our targets and our levels of support. In that regard, the prophetic words of the President of the Maldives resonate with good reason: "If you can't save the Maldives today you can't save yourself tomorrow."

Building upon the momentum of the much-proclaimed new era of engagement, we are hopeful that longstanding issues on the international peace and security agenda may achieve progress. In some cases, change is already afoot. Cross-Strait relations between Taiwan and China have improved and, for the first time, Taiwan has participated as an observer at the World Health Assembly. Haiti held elections earlier

this year, in a relatively peaceful and orderly fashion. After 47 years, the Organization of American States has now lifted Cuba's suspension from that body.

We welcome these developments and expect that they signal a change in approach that will allow for the full integration of our sisterly nations of Taiwan, Haiti and Cuba into their rightful place in the international community. However, for that integration to occur, we must find an appropriate way for Taiwan to participate in the activities of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, we must sustain our support for Haiti and we must urge that efforts be made to end the anachronistic embargo against Cuba.

In cases where processes have stalled, let us renew our engagement. We cannot fail in realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. We also cannot fail in resolving the political stalemate in our neighbour country of Honduras. Peace and security are not options, they are imperatives.

My Government is committed to securing just and lasting peace for our people. Last year, we happily concluded a special agreement with Guatemala that will pave the way for the referral of the Guatemalan territorial claim to our country to the International Court of Justice. A preliminary and critical phase is upon us, in which we must prepare our people to determine by referendum whether the case shall be referred. My Government is beginning a comprehensive public education campaign to raise awareness and ensure that, when our people decide, they will do so having been fully informed of the issues. We are approaching what could be a definitive moment in our history.

I began my statement by addressing the governance dilemma — to govern and to be governed. What is consistent in the demands that we as developing countries — and small States in particular — have made is that we want to have a meaningful role in the governance of our affairs at the international level. We want to have meaningful input into the solutions that are being crafted for the problems that we face and of which, in some cases, we bear the disproportionate burden.

For us, the model of multilateral cooperation must be imbued with legitimacy. For that to happen, we must work for a more inclusive process. Twenty-first century challenges require a new dynamic for international relations, one that must be inclusive and, dare I say, democratic. The United Nations Charter is founded upon the premise of democracy. "We the peoples of the United Nations" assert our determination not only to be governed by the principles set out in the Charter but also to govern by these principles.

As such, the Charter itself vests in us a role in our own governance. We in Belize accept that role, and we are thus empowered, notwithstanding the pressing challenges in satisfying the basic needs of our people, to return our country to a path of sustainable development. No effort will be spared to draw upon our limited resources as well as other available resources to invest in our human resources, to improve our political and legal institutions, to support traditional and niche industries, to practise fiscal responsibility and to protect and preserve our environment for present and future generations.

We solemnly agree that our development is our own responsibility. We welcome the support of the international community in the spirit of multilateral cooperation as we take action to achieve our high aspirations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Yeo (Singapore): When we met here last year, financial institutions such as Lehman Brothers and American International Group (AIG) were falling like tenpins. For weeks, credit froze as perceptions of risk shot up. The global financial system went into seizure. National Governments took emergency measures to rescue banks and keep credit lines open. The United States Treasury and the United States Federal Reserve, in particular, reacted with extraordinary boldness. For a period of time, it seemed as if everyone was flying blind.

After a year, the situation no longer looks as bleak today. In fact, after a sharp contraction of the advanced economies in the first half of this year, there are signs of a recovery. Some of the leading indicators are flashing positive again and the next two quarters will probably register good growth globally. Whether this growth can be sustained is, however, a different question.

It would be a mistake to think that the global economic crisis will soon be over. The crisis came about because of excesses and imbalances which have to be put right. Looking back, we know that the excesses were the result of inadequate regulation of banks and quasi-banking institutions. Over the years, clever minds turned non-banks into de facto ones which were not regulated as conventional banks. This unregulated financial sector grew to dwarf the regulated sector.

To forestall collapse when the bubble burst, Governments and regulators stepped in taking over financial institutions, guaranteeing liabilities, increasing public spending and pumping liquidity into the economy. These are emergency measures which are needed to get the global economy through a critical phase. They have stabilized the financial sector and prevented the real economy from being too badly affected.

However, as when steroids are administered to reduce inflammation, there is a price to be paid for this temporary relief. First, the expectation that Governments will step in when things go badly wrong creates a huge moral hazard. Once Governments set a bottom limit to the consequences of risk-taking, more risks will be taken in the future.

Secondly, the huge increase in global liquidity has slowed down or reversed the fall in inflated asset prices. Worldwide stock markets have benefited from easy money. In Asia, property markets are booming again even though the real economy is still struggling. Withdrawing liquidity without destabilizing economies and asset markets in the coming months and years will be a tricky business.

And thirdly, the emergency measures which have been taken reduce the need for painful restructuring. Yet without major restructuring of regulatory systems and businesses, the imbalances which created the conditions for the crisis in the first place can only get worse.

While excesses in the financial sector were the trigger of the crisis, the deeper underlying cause was the global imbalance between producers and consumers and between saving and consumption. For too long, the world depended on the United States consumers keeping global demand high and on lending those consumers the money to keep the game going. To correct this imbalance, Asians have to consume more and save less as a proportion of income, while Americans have to consume less and save more. Otherwise, a global Keynesian paradox of thrift will cause the global economy to operate below capacity.

Rebalancing the global economy is, however, not a simple matter at all, and is not only about economics: it is also deeply political. The rise of Asia is altering the global power structure. Nothing expresses this more than the complex relationship that now ties the United States and China together. China, with its reserves of over $2 trillion, is heavily invested in the United States dollar, making it a major stakeholder in the United States economy. Without continuing market confidence in the United States dollar, not just the United States economy, but the entire global economy will be put at risk.

Looking ahead, however, it is not going to be a bipolar world but a multi-polar world. Europe and Japan will remain heavyweights. India, Russia, Brazil and others will become more significant players. A multi-polar world means a messier world with a diversity of political systems, values and worldviews. Non-State actors like civil society organizations must increasingly be engaged. At the same time, we are all members of the same human family sharing the same planet. Looking ahead, we will need more effective global governance across a wide range of issues from protection of human rights and international financial regulation to efforts to combat pandemics, climate change and terrorism.

The greatest challenge confronting us today is that of ensuring effective global governance. We do not want a global Government but we do need better coordination, cooperation and enforcement in many areas. The reform of the United Nations, including the United Nations Security Council, is going to take time. Incremental rather than dramatic change is a more practical approach.

In terms of world trade, the World Trade Organization, while far from perfect, can still function well with effective political leadership. Once that leadership is supplied, the Doha Round of negotiations can be concluded within the next few years. We are fortunate to have in Pascal Lamy a strong Director-General at the helm. But this is a dangerous period because domestic politics in many countries favour greater protectionism. At all regional and international

forums, we must take a clear collective stand against protectionism.

Climate change is a long-term challenge for humanity which needs to be addressed with some urgency. While we cannot be sure how much increased carbon dioxide emissions will affect the global climate in the coming decades and centuries, it would be irresponsible for us in this generation not to start acting now. The increased weather volatility we have been experiencing in recent years could be a warning of longer-term trends already under way. An international agreement on climate change which aligns our interests and efforts is absolutely necessary to preserve this planet for future generations.

For that reason, we must redouble efforts to conclude negotiations for an international agreement at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference at the end of this year. It is good that caring for the environment is increasingly becoming a moral norm in the world, especially among the young. We must not fail them. The strong political commitment expressed by many leaders at the Summit on Climate Change, chaired by the Secretary-General himself here last week, gives us reason for hope.

The present economic crisis is a major challenge to global governance. In November last year, then United States President George W. Bush convened the first summit of the Group of 20 (G-20). The second meeting of leaders was held in London in April and the third has just concluded in Pittsburgh under President Barack Obama's chairmanship. The G-20 has now been designated the premier forum for international economic cooperation, replacing the Group of Eight (G-8).

This G-20 process and the swift, decisive actions that it brought about have helped avert an economic depression in the last year. The emergency measures taken by various Governments in response to the financial tsunami have bought us precious time to restructure and rebalance the global economy. In Pittsburgh, the G-20 leaders acknowledged that a sense of normalcy should not lead to complacency. We welcome their pledge to adopt policies needed for strong, sustained and balanced growth. If the biggest economies do not persist in that effort — and persisting means pain for domestic constituencies in many countries — the respite we are now enjoying will lead to an even bigger crisis, this time possibly involving foreign exchange markets as well.

In the coming months and years, it is important for the G-20 process to develop greater legitimacy, especially as it begins to deal with a broader set of issues. That the establishment of the G-20 leaders meeting was not blessed by the United Nations or other existing international organizations should not hold us back from giving it full support. Although the G-20 process is not ideal, it is the most important driver of change that we have right now.

The United Nations itself is too intricate and not structured to deal with issues such as a major financial crisis. The old G-8 lacked representation, and the G-8 Plus was not acceptable because it put the additional participants at a disadvantage. As for the International Monetary Fund, it was never designed to tackle a crisis of such scale. In any case, the Bretton Woods institutions themselves need reform, which indeed is a major subject on the G-20 agenda.

For the G-20 process to be effective and legitimate, however, it is not enough for leaders to confer and make general exhortations. Ministers and experts must also meet and go into details. They should not be confined to the same G-20 countries every time. We need variable geometry in membership. For different subjects, there could be different groups of participants, including both G-20 and non-G-20 countries. The views of small States, which comprise the majority of Members of the United Nations, must not be ignored. The meetings should be transparent. There must be wide consultations so that those not included in specific meetings can still table their views. Depending on the subject, those consultations can take place at the United Nations or at one of the other international organizations.

Mindful of the need to widen participation, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown invited regional representatives, such as the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Chair of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, to the G-20 leaders meeting in London in April 2009. President Obama followed this precedent in Pittsburgh. We in ASEAN certainly hope that the inclusion of the ASEAN Chair will become the norm at future G-20 leaders meetings. It is right that the United Nations

Secretary-General was included from the very beginning.

A balance has to be struck between effectiveness and inclusiveness. If a meeting is too big, it becomes unwieldy and unworkable. If too small, it lacks representation and legitimacy. As most Members of the United Nations are not in the G-20, it is important for us to have a say on the role the G-20 should play as an agent of change in global governance. While we should support the G-20 process, we should do so in a way that ensures that our own interests as smaller States are taken into account.

A great power shift is taking place in the world. The formal establishment of the G-20 as a new international institution last week marks a momentous new beginning. History shows that power shifts never occur smoothly. Without a good system of global governance, we can be sure that the power shift in this century will also be a troubled one. Putting that system in place requires the collective effort of all of us. We should not be lulled by the temporary easing of the global economic crisis into thinking that the worst is behind us and that we can return to our old ways.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Péter Balázs, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary.

Mr. Balázs (Hungary): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the President on his assumption of the high post of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. In fulfilling his challenging tasks during this session, he may rest assured of the support and cooperation of the delegation of the Republic of Hungary.

The current session of the General Assembly begins its work against the backdrop of an extraordinary downturn of the world economy. Hungary was among those countries which were especially hard hit by the storm of the current financial and economic crisis. In order to cope with its consequences, the Hungarian Government has adopted and implemented a series of stabilization measures. As a result of this policy, the first positive trends have already emerged. Today we can claim that the Hungarian economy is well on its way towards recovery and that the foundations of a more sustainable development have been laid. If implemented vigorously, the strict fiscal policy of my Government will put the country back into the ranks of the financially stable economies.

At the same time, Hungary cannot and does not want to turn a blind eye to the plight of millions worldwide, especially the most vulnerable ones in the developing world, particularly in Africa, who have been thrown into poverty as a consequence of the global economic crisis. The present crisis should not undermine our common efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Hungary continues to take its share of responsibility by implementing its donor programmes in Afghanistan, Viet Nam and the neighbouring middle-income countries of the Western Balkans.

Global crises require that we all think and act together in the spirit of shared responsibility. It is right that climate change is high on the United Nations agenda, as it threatens the very foundations of our life. Yet for too long we failed to respond adequately. Hungary is willing to accept its share of responsibility and is fully committed to achieving important results at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. In this regard, the summit on climate change recently convened by the Secretary-General was a useful forum in identifying the necessary steps towards a successful outcome.

Preventing conflicts and managing crises remain high on our agenda. The United Nations, in cooperation with regional organizations, continues to play a key role in this respect. Full integration of the Western Balkans into European and Euro-Atlantic structures is a means to promote the stability and prosperity of that region, a goal that Hungary supports actively. Interaction among countries of the region to fulfil the conditions of European integration is an essential tool. International efforts in Kosovo represent a good example of effective cooperation among various stakeholders, such as the European Union and NATO.

In Georgia, the situation on the ground remains fragile. We firmly believe that a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict must be based on full respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of that country within its internationally recognized borders. We deplore the decision that led to the termination of the monitoring activities of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the breakaway parts of Georgia/Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The resumption

of the international presence in these regions is necessary.

The stakes in Afghanistan are high. The success of international stabilization and reconstruction efforts will have a major impact both on our security and on the defence of the values our societies stand for. Failure is not an option. Hungary will remain committed to supporting, politically and by contributing troops and civilian and development assistance, the creation of a stable Afghanistan governed by the rule of law. We welcome the joint initiative of the United Kingdom, Germany and France to hold an international conference at the ministerial level, co-chaired by the United Nations and the Afghan Government.

In the Middle East, Hungary warmly welcomes the commitment of the United States to vigorously pursue a two-State solution and a comprehensive peace. It is now up to the parties themselves to engage in a meaningful process of negotiation. It is our responsibility to assist them in carrying the process forward.

The nuclear programme of Iran continues to be a matter of most serious concern. We deeply regret that Iran's leadership has refused to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions. In flagrant violation of its international obligations, Iran has even increased its uranium-enrichment capacities. Recent revelations about the existence of a second enrichment facility underscore the legitimacy of our previous concerns. We urge Iran to engage in substantive negotiations on its nuclear programme without further delay. The news of recent missile tests only reinforces our sense of urgency.

The idea of a world without nuclear weapons has long been cherished. We welcome the affirmations of commitment to this goal made at the recent summit-level meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.6191), along with the adoption of a comprehensive set of measures to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. Hungary hopes that the momentum created by that meeting will also have a positive impact on the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The global economic and financial crisis has affected the political landscape in many countries and has led to the re-emergence of extreme nationalist, racist and xenophobic ideologies and political movements. Like many other countries, Hungary is not immune from this phenomenon. We cannot allow those alarming trends to prevail or to roll back the advance of democratic values and human rights. The Government of Hungary condemns, in the most resolute terms, all forms of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia and fights any manifestation of them not only in words, but also in deeds.

The promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of national minorities and the preservation of their cultural and linguistic identities, have traditionally been high on the agenda of the Hungarian Government. The presence of flourishing minority communities does not weaken a State, but rather makes it stronger. Trust between the majority and minorities within a country can be built only on that basis. The Republic of Hungary attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations Forum on Minority Issues and is determined to contribute actively to the Forum's second meeting, to be held this November in Geneva. We are witnessing alarming tendencies that have a detrimental effect on the political participation, cultural life and educational opportunities of minorities. The international community should pay special attention to respect for minority rights.

At this point, I would also like to confirm the commitment of Hungary, as a newly elected member of the Human Rights Council, to play an active role in the most important human rights body of the United Nations. We strongly believe that there is a clear and urgent need for further institution-building in the field of the prevention of genocide and mass atrocities. For that reason, this year Hungary prepared a feasibility study on the establishment of the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities. It is envisaged that the Centre will work in close cooperation with the United Nations, including the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The ongoing changes in international politics and the world economy have created a new situation for the United Nations. We welcome and strongly support the efforts aimed at strengthening the ability of the Organization to adapt to the new realities, but we cannot be satisfied with the pace of the transformation. The present challenges should lend additional impetus to moving forward more vigorously on such issues as

Security Council reform, peacekeeping activities, system-wide coherence, budgeting of the Organization, management reform and reform of the environmental governance system of the United Nations. With a view to actively promoting those goals, Hungary presented its candidacies for the Security Council for the term 2012-2013 and for the Economic and Social Council for the term 2011-2013.

Once again the United Nations stands at a crossroads. It needs to adapt to the changing international environment. This change will require sacrifices, but it also offers new opportunities as it paves the way for new consensus on the future of the United Nations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Daw Penjo, Foreign Secretary of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan): I should like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. We are confident that under his able leadership and guidance, our deliberations will be successful. I assure him of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation. I would also like to convey our deep appreciation to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, for his leadership at the sixty-third session.

It has been only 18 months since my country successfully made the transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy. Within this period, the elected Government has made every effort to establish a strong foundation for a sustainable and vibrant democracy, as it is these initial years that will determine the direction of democracy in Bhutan. Concrete steps are being taken to empower the people and to ensure that democracy truly benefits every citizen.

The people of Bhutan, although hesitant at first, were guided and encouraged by our enlightened and visionary monarchs and have fully embraced democracy. From our experience so far, we are confident that a strong foundation for democracy has been established; it is now time to nurture and continue to strengthen this foundation.

The world is grappling with multiple, interlinked global crises. The impact of these crises has been particularly severe on the least developed countries, where levels of poverty and insecurity are already high. The food and energy crises have driven millions of the most vulnerable people deeper into poverty and further desperation. Meeting their needs and freeing them from the cycle of poverty continues to be the major challenge to development and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is inconceivable that, in an era of unprecedented prosperity, the vast majority of the world's population remains in poverty and destitution. The alleviation of poverty, therefore, must be at the forefront of the international community's development efforts.

Since the adoption of the Monterrey Consensus in 2002, developing countries have made significant progress in many areas of domestic resource mobilization. However, challenges remain, especially during the current economic slowdown, for developing countries to mobilize adequate domestic resources to meet their development needs. For many such countries, official development assistance (ODA) remains the most important source of external financing for achieving their development objectives and attaining the MDGs. We therefore encourage donor countries to take concrete steps towards fulfilling their ODA commitments.

In Bhutan, we have achieved relative socio-economic progress over the past five years. The annual gross domestic product growth rate has averaged around 8 per cent, the national literacy rate has reached 60 per cent and health coverage has been sustained at 90 per cent. The royal Government continues to accord high priority to the social sector. Bhutan launched its tenth five-year plan in July 2008 with the overarching goal of poverty reduction and implementing MDG-based initiatives. As this is the first plan to be implemented under our first elected Government, its successful implementation is of paramount importance to reaffirming the people's faith in parliamentary democracy and ensuring a successful political transition.

These successes in the political, social and economic fields would not have been possible without the support of our development partners, bilateral and multilateral. To them I offer our deep gratitude and appreciation, and we look forward to their continued assistance and support during this critical transitional phase.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the impact of continuing climate change cannot be ignored. While its adverse effects will spare none, small

developing countries will bear a heavier burden, even though they contribute the least to the causes. Despite Bhutan's negligible emission of greenhouse gases, our fragile mountain ecology faces potential threats, primarily the adverse impact on agriculture, which is the mainstay of our people. Erratic and severe weather patterns and the threat of glacial lake outburst floods are of particular concern to Bhutan. Other hazards, such as flash floods, landslides, forest fires and droughts, are also likely to increase. When Cyclone Aila hit the Bay of Bengal in May, it also had disastrous and widespread effects in Bhutan, touching every corner of the country. Precious lives were lost; power and water supplies affected; roads, bridges and vital infrastructure damaged. Farms, the most vulnerable sector, were the worst affected.

Our capacity to carry out adaptation and mitigation measures is severely constrained by our lack of scientific, technical and financial resources. Bhutan has always maintained that climate change must be addressed within the framework of sustainable development. The issues are inextricably linked to development, and any debate on the subject must take into consideration equity and the right of developing countries to be able to provide their people with better livelihoods.

My delegation appreciates the initiative of the Secretary-General in convening the high-level Summit on Climate Change. It provided the necessary political impetus for negotiations to be concluded in Copenhagen this December. We must now advance the progress of the multilateral negotiations in every possible way to ensure that tangible results are achieved in Copenhagen for the well-being of present and future generations. In this regard, I am pleased to inform this gathering that Bhutan will assume the chair of and host the sixteenth summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in April 2010. Given the importance of the subject, climate change and environment will be the Summit's theme, and the issue will receive our leaders' highest attention when they meet in Thimphu.

Terrorism in all forms and manifestations is a serious threat to domestic as well as global peace and security. It endangers and undermines our common values of respect for human rights and the rule of law, and our basic desire to live in peace and harmony. Preventing terrorism preserves these fundamental values, through which we can achieve lasting peace and security.

Even my country, which has always enjoyed peace and stability, has not been spared this evil menace. Bhutan therefore fully supports the international consensus on taking firm action against terrorism. The General Assembly's adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288) was an important political achievement that represents our common approach to combating the scourge of global terrorism. We must show similar commitment in concluding a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. Within our region, the leaders of SAARC have concluded an agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, reaffirming our region's commitment to collectively addressing the evils of terrorism.

Bhutan accords high importance to reform of the United Nations, particularly the revitalization of the General Assembly and reform of the Security Council. We fully support the expansion of the Security Council in both its permanent and non-permanent membership. For their active role in global affairs and their capacity and resources to shoulder greater responsibilities, reflect present global realities and make the United Nations more representative, we fully support electing India, Japan, Brazil and Germany, plus two African countries, to be permanent Security Council members.

My delegation is greatly encouraged by the momentum gained in the intergovernmental negotiations on the reform process. We hope that the sixty-fourth session will build on the progress achieved so far and bring this long-drawn-out process to a successful conclusion under Mr. Treki's leadership.

Natural calamities are occurring regularly every year, and smaller developing countries are increasingly faced with the challenge of coping with such problems. Just last week, my country was severely affected by an earthquake that measured 6.3 on the Richter scale. It is one of the biggest disasters we have experienced in recent times. Its devastating effects were felt in six districts of eastern Bhutan, where 13 people lost their lives and many were left injured and homeless. About 1,900 homes, numerous schools, Government offices and historical monuments were destroyed or damaged. The full impact is still being ascertained. During this difficult period, we have been comforted by the outpouring of support from friendly countries such as

India and others, which have rendered much-needed technical and financial assistance for the massive relief work.

Given the increasing frequency of such severe natural calamities and their negative effects on many parts of the world, there is a need for institutionalized disaster preparedness and response mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels. In this context, the establishment of the United Nations Central Emergency Fund is an important step towards providing the disaster relief that is urgently required for life-saving operations. Bearing this in mind and as an expression of our continued support for the commendable humanitarian work of the United Nations, Bhutan has made a modest contribution to the Fund, which we hope to increase in the coming years.

These are indeed difficult times with multiple crises hitting us simultaneously. The threat of climate change is real and its effects are occurring even as I speak. Global governance needs to be made more effective to help us address the global challenges more efficiently. In this interdependent world, it will be impossible for any country to act alone in resolving these crises. Therefore, as we gather here once again to deliberate and find solutions to the many difficult problems confronting us, I conclude by reiterating my delegation's full support and cooperation in working towards addressing our common challenges.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.